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## Perspectives on the Church and Church Growth Theory

Charles Van Engen

*Fuller Theological Seminary*

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## Perspectives on the Church and Church Growth Theory

Chuck Van Engen

### *Introduction*

Because we will be talking about the church and its nature during this conference, I thought it might be good for us to be reminded of some basic characteristics of the church and the various ways the church has seen itself. At the risk of oversimplification, I would like to briefly survey ten broad perspectives on the Church which one may derive from the Church's history and relate them to Church Growth theory. The ten perspectives mentioned in this paper are in no way meant to be exhaustive of the multiple ways one may view the Church. I do not see these ten as mutually-exclusive. Neither am I assuming that in each age the church has exhibited only one of these perspectives, though at certain times one or two may have been stronger than the others. The ten perspectives are meant only to illustrate the breadth of viewpoints available to us in seeking to describe the mystery that is the Church: called forth by Jesus Christ, created by the Holy Spirit, sustained by the power of God, involving human persons and structures, shaped by its contexts, and incarnated in specific times and places.

I want to offer a series of photographs, a collage, or a kaleidoscope, if you will, of various perspectives on the Church, all of which in some way or other have influenced Church Growth Ecclesiology. I am intentionally using the term "perspectives" here, rather than "paradigm," because each of the following ten viewpoints is not meant to represent an entire theoretical framework about the church in each historical moment. Rather,

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each of the ten “perspectives” is offered as a way of illustrating an aspect of Church Growth Ecclesiology. My thesis is this:

*THESIS: Church Growth ecclesiology represents an innovative and integrated combination of at least ten perspectives on the church that can be found in the history of the church.*

1. *The Church As A Fellowship Of Disciples Of Jesus: An Early Church, Organismic Perspective*

A. *The Perspective*

The New Testament offers us three possible ways to define the church: by way of a word study, through propositional description, and by means of metaphor or image.

1) *The word “ekklesia”*

One way to define the Church has been to do a word-study of *ekklesia*, used at least seventy-three times in the New Testament to refer to the Church. “The word is derived from *ek* and *kaleo* and (speaks of) the assembly of free citizens in the Greek city-states who through a herald were ‘called out’ of their homes to the marketplace (See Charles Chaney: 1991, 6–11). In ordinary usage the word denoted ‘the people as assembled,’ ‘the public meeting’” (H. Berkhof: 1979, 343). The term *ekklesia* indicated the self-consciousness of the early Christians who saw themselves as the continuation of what God had begun in the wilderness with the nation of Israel, called together by the proclamation of the gospel for the purpose of belonging to God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (See, for example, Acts 19:39). Yet a word-study of *ekklesia* tells us little about the reason for which the group is called, the purposes and goals of the group, the parameters that determine who is part of the group, and how the group participates in God’s mission in its surrounding cultural context.

2) *Propositional definition*

A second way to describe the Church is by crafting a propositional definition. How we would love to have the confidence of Martin Luther who said, “Thank God a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd (John 10:3). So children pray, ‘I believe in one holy Christian Church.’ Its holiness...consists of the Word of God and true faith” (*Luther’s Works*, vol. xi.). Hendrik Kraemer came close to Luther’s simple definition: “Where

there is a group of baptized Christians, there is the Church."<sup>1</sup> However, a purely propositional definition is not enough to show us the church's structure, purpose, destiny or mission. In fact, the New Testament gives us no formal definition of the Church. However, the New Testament does give us a description of the characteristics of the congregations in Jerusalem and Thessalonica when they were each about a year old. If we combine those descriptions found in Acts 2: 42–47 and I Thessalonians 1:2–10, we arrive at the following list of ten characteristics of the church:

1. They confess Jesus as Lord;
2. There were "signs and wonders;"
3. The Word was preached to those who have not yet heard;
4. Theirs was a loving fellowship;
5. They had an exemplary way of life;
6. They suffered for the sake of the Gospel;
7. They exhibited a new spiritual joy and a dynamic new hope;
8. They showed a radical conversion;
9. They were witnesses to the world;
10. The Lord added to their number and the Word of God spread through the region<sup>2</sup>

### 3) *Images Of The Church In Mission*

A third way to define the Church was used by Jesus and the New Testament writers: metaphors of the Church. Paul Minear demonstrated that there are at least ninety-six different *Images of the Church in the New Testament*. We are familiar with many of these, like Body, Temple, Building, Household, Family, Saints, New Israel, New Creation, and Branches of the Vine. These rich images express what the church is and serve also to show what the church should become. They call the members of the church to see themselves in a new light, challenging them to become more like the pictures offered.

These images are metaphors of the church in mission. The church is the mysterious creation of God. Its primary reason for being is to exist for the glory of God in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3). Almost all the images of the church in the New Testament are not still photographs but rather moving pictures, dynamic videos of the church living out its witness in the world. For example, the church is the salt of the *earth*. It is the light of *the world*.

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As the Body of Christ, it is the physical presence of Jesus *in the world*. As a royal priesthood (I Peter 2) the church is a priest *for the gentiles* who see the good works of the church and glorify God. So J. I Packer defines the church as, “the pilgrim people of God on earth...”

The church is that historically continuous society which traces its lineage back to the apostles and the day of Pentecost, and behind that to Abraham, father of the faithful,...It is God’s adopted family of children and heirs, bound to him as he is bound to it in the bonds of his gracious covenant. It is also the body and bride of Jesus Christ, the company of faithful (persons)...who enjoy union and communion with the Mediator through the Holy Spirit... Now it is the nature of the church to live under the authority of Jesus Christ as its teacher no less than as its king and priest (Packer: 1996, 74–76).

Generally, one might say that the early church saw itself as rather amorphous, organic, relational, dynamic and changing. Though there is a move toward structure and institutionalization, yet as the church moves out through the Mediterranean world, the sense one gets is one of creativity, fluidity and experimentation. Such qualities are also important for the Church “in a postmodern age” (J. Richard Middleton & Brian Walsh: 1995, 191–192).

*B. Church Growth Is Growth In Organic, Relational Fellowship.*<sup>3</sup>

Donald McGavran’s very early writing about “people movements” stressed this organic and relational aspect of the Church. In commenting on the New Testament Church, McGavran wrote,

It is to us an inescapable inference that Paul at Antioch must have known (about many) relatives (of converts in Antioch) and must have realized their enormous importance in the extension of the faith. It may be deduced that every group of converts greatly multiplied the numbers of those relatives who were intensely interested. Every new synagogue which was reached by Paul yielded him a considerable number of men and women who, fired by his incandescent faith, would naturally talk to him about their relatives in as yet unreached

town and cities. Thus he would come to know of scores of communities in which the Gospel would be heartily welcomed (McGavran: 1955, 28).

As can be seen in endnote 4, below, Donald McGavran drew from this organic perspective in his definition of the Church. "The Church," McGavran wrote, "is made up of the redeemed who believe in Jesus Christ, live in Him, adore Him, and trust Him. It is not merely a gathering of good men and women engaged in moral pursuits. It is Christ's Body in conscious relationship to its Head. As there is only one Christ and one Body, so there is only one ministry, that of Christ in His Body. Some congregations have become so *unconscious* of a living relationship that it an open question whether they are truly of the Church or not (McGavran: 1979, 246). McGavran (Glasser & McGavran: 1983, 104) drew heavily from Lesslie Newbigin's view of the church articulated by Newbigin in 1954 in *The Household of God*.

Thom Rainer makes a point of beginning his chapter on "Ecclesiology and Church Growth" by emphasizing the metaphors of Body of Christ, Bride of Christ, the People of God, Priesthood, Flock and Temple of the Holy Spirit (Rainer: 1993, 145–146).

C. Peter Wagner built on an organic perspective of the Church by utilizing the concepts of vitality and health. In my judgment, some of the most basic concepts in Church Growth theory have to do with what Wagner called, "The Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church" and the "Eight Pathologies" of church illness (C. Peter Wagner: 1976; 1979a). These have been reproduced numerous times by Wagner and others in the Church Growth Movement. Notice how strongly organismic and relational is the foundational perception of the church that they represent.

Charles Chaney picked up on this aspect of Church Growth theory in the way it has drawn from Roland Allen's organic and relational view of the church.

To my thinking, Roland Allen was on target when he said that what we ultimately seek in our efforts to bring the nations to faith in Christ is not converts, the multiplication of congregations, or the Christianization of the social order, but a manifestation of the character and glory of Christ. We seek, when we address the gospel to any people, to manifest the universality, the love and the mercy, the glory and power of Christ...And although Al-

len would say that the ultimate mission of the Church is not identical with the growth of churches, he would also insist that the manifestation of Christ is achieved through and in the multiplication of congregations...That is how the Church "which is His body, (becomes) the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23) (Chaney: 1991, 8).<sup>4</sup>

Finally, the organic and relational aspect of the Church may be seen, for example, in the strong emphasis in the Church Growth Movement regarding "church growth through groups" (John Ellas: 1994, 80–89); the emphasis on the "cell," along with "congregation" and "celebration;" the development by Carl George of the "meta-church" theory; and the stress on cell-based churches

It is a caricature of Church Growth to think that the movement is interested only in management, numbers, strategy and engineered results. At its most basic, the Church Growth Movement has always, and continues to be, fundamentally interested in persons, seeking, as McGavran has said, to find ways to bring "men and women into living relationship to Jesus Christ" (See endnote 6, below; and McGavran: 1970, 44). And wherever the Church Growth Movement has spawned the planting of new churches among unreached people groups, the new churches that have arisen have often exhibited these same organic and relational characteristics during the first decades of their life. Has this not also been a characteristic of newly planted congregations in North America during their first years of life?

## *2. The Church As Institution: A Medieval, Organizational Perspective*

### *A. The Perspective*

As Paul Minear and others have pointed out, during the early centuries ecclesiology amounted to the use of various images to stimulate the Church into taking on certain characteristics. Augustine's day marks a watershed period when the Church's self-understanding shifted from seeing the concepts of "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" in terms of self-examination and critique to using those four words for self-congratulation and self-defense. This culminated in the triumphalism of the Council of Trent where there was a near-identification of the Roman Church with the Kingdom of God, and a celebration of

the fact that the four attributes (one, holy, catholic and apostolic) were descriptions of the Holy Roman See. David Bosch wrote about this time.

In the period under discussion...the church underwent a series of profound changes. It moved from being a small, persecuted minority to being a large and influential organization; it changed from harassed sect to oppressor of sects; every link between Christianity and Judaism was severed; an intimate relationship between throne and altar evolved; membership (in) the church became a matter of course; the office of the believer was largely forgotten; the dogma was conclusively fixed and finalized; the church had adjusted to the long postponement of Christ's return; the apocalyptic missionary movement of the primitive church gave way to the expansion of Christendom (D. Bosch: 1991, 237).

Meanwhile Orthodox Christianity had moved into a mystical perspective on the Church, so that the Church was essentially shaped by its liturgical life in the world—and mission was defined by the nature of the Church.

In Orthodoxy, then, the church is the dispenser of salvific light and the mediator of power for renewal which produces life. The "ecclesial character" of mission means "that the Church is the aim, the fulfillment of the Gospel, rather than an instrument or means of mission." The church is part of the message it proclaims. Mission is not to be regarded as a function of the church; the Orthodox reject "such instrumental interpretations of the Church." Neither is mission the proclaiming of some "ethical truths or principles"; it is "calling people to become members of the Christian community in a visible concrete form." "The Church is the aim of mission, not vice versa." "It is ecclesiology which determines missiology." For this reason the basic elements of an answer to the question about the Orthodox understanding of mission must be looked for in its "doctrine and experience of the church"; it is not related exclusively to the church's "apostolicity," "but to all the *notea* of the church" (Bosch: 1991, 207).<sup>5</sup>

So whether it was the more institutionalized form of Rome

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in the West, or the liturgical form of the Orthodox East, the structure of the church, coupled with a close tie to the state, was determinative for the ecclesiology of the Middle Ages. In this view, mission was the task of the state, and consisted primarily in drawing people within the boundaries of the institutional church. Church planting was the planting of extensions of the institutional church. Because of the Medieval synthesis, all of life was to be drawn into the sphere of church-defined faith. And the church was seen through a diocesan lens, whereby all those living in a certain geographic area were considered members of the church of that place, expected to obey and support their church.

As Rodney Clapp has observed,

Evangelism under Constantine...has a long if not always illustrious history. Once Christianity was made the official religion of an empire, evangelism became as much a concern of the emperor as of the church. The emperor, seen as "imitator of God," united in his person both religious and political offices. "The objectives of the state (within Orthodoxy) coincided with the objectives of the church and vice versa...The practice of direct royal involvement in the missionary enterprise would persist throughout the Middle Ages and, in fact, into the modern era" (Clapp: 1996, 159, quoting from Bosch: 1991, 205-206).

*B. Church Growth Is Institutional Growth.*

Because of its emphasis on the visible, institutional church to be found in congregations whose corporate life can be studied and whose members can be counted, Church Growth theory is seen by some to be strongly institutional in its approach to ecclesiology. This impression is not entirely without merit. In 1983, twenty years after founding the Church Growth Movement, Donald McGavran wrote an assessment of the Roman Catholic Documents of Vatican II dealing with the Church. And it is interesting to see his comfortable acceptance of the Roman Catholic institutional ecclesiology (admittedly softened somewhat at Vatican II). Quoting from those documents, McGavran wrote,

The necessity of the church is...assumed in (the Documents of Vatican II). God has "planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ."

“Established in the present era of time, the Church” will call them “together from all peoples....” In short, throughout this exposition of the classical theology of mission, a high doctrine of the church is consistently held. Evangelicals (meaning here, McGavran) also hold to a high doctrine of the church. They will, however, not limit the church to the Church of Rome...Evangelicals believe that outside the church “there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”<sup>6</sup> They also hold, therefore, that the proper expansion of the church is of the highest priority if we are to meet the deepest need of the human race...

One of the aims of this chapter is to point out that evangelical theology of mission is largely at one with Roman Catholic theology of mission in maintaining that, biblically, the central task of Christian mission always has been, is now, and ever will be the proclamation of the gospel and the “churching” or discipling of the multitudinous peoples on earth. The proper expansion of the church inevitably results from discipling the peoples. Proclaiming the gospel by word and deed with a view to incorporating believers in the holy church is the central priority of mission (Glasser and McGavran: 1983, 186–187, 200).

Church Growth’s strong emphasis on administration, strategy, congregational structure and institutional leadership and management begins to look rather institutional in its perception of the church. When denominations have carried out the activity of planting new churches, for example, the enterprise seems quite similar to the concept of “*plantatio ecclesiae*” as it was used in the 16th and 17th centuries by the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Gisbertus Voetius. Essentially, this involved the institutional church planting local manifestations of itself much like colonial governments planted their flags all over the globe. Until very recently, my denomination, for example, the Reformed Church in America, has, carried out a program of church extension. This involved following our members to wherever they had migrated and providing a pastor and a building for them. In the 1970’s and 1980’s this was expanded slightly, but still looked a lot like a company opening new branch offices, or new franchises, of itself in specially-selected locations around the U.S. This perspective of “church planting,” looks and feels

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rather institutional to me.

Though I am intentionally trying to avoid evaluation in this paper, yet we should keep in mind that an over-emphasis on the church as institution is associated in church history with a high degree of nominality (See Eddie Gibbs: 1994, 21), and a decrease in emphasis on the spirituality and relationships of the faithful. It also presents serious theological difficulties as both Delos Miles and C. Wayne Zunkel rightly point out, drawing from Orlando Costas's critique of Church Growth for being too ecclesio-centric.

(Church Growth) has concentrated its efforts on ecclesiology...And by so doing, it has made the church the "locus" of its theological reflection. The outcome of this has been a theology of mission that revolves around the church instead of God's redemptive action in Christ (which is the basis for the existence of the church). The result...is a church-centered theology that mitigates "against the 'locus' of biblical theology: Christ." To affirm that the aim of evangelism is the multiplication of churches is to advocate a theology that makes the church the end of God's mission (Zunkel: 1987, 67, quoting Orlando Costas: 1974, 134-135; see also Miles: 1981, 143).<sup>7</sup>

It was precisely these kinds of issues surrounding an over-emphasis on the institutional perspective on the Church that gave rise to the Protestant Reformation.

### *3. The Church As The Community Of The Word: A Protestant Reformation, Creedal Perspective*

#### *A. The Perspective*

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century added an important corrective with the idea of the marks of the Church. Prior to the Protestant Reformation, the *notae ecclesiae*, or attributes of the church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic, had been transformed into static adjectives describing the institutionalized Roman church. "Those four words about the Church as found in the Nicene Creed were slowly reduced to simply descriptive, recognizable elements of the Roman Church. They constituted the basis for defending the status quo. They were misused to declare that only the Roman See was holy, perfect, complete, and God-given" (Hans Küng: 1980, 266). Because of the static, self-

justifying appropriation of the four attributes by the Roman Church, the Reformers felt that it was important to draw a sharp distinction between attributes and marks of the Church.<sup>8</sup>

The Reformers felt the need to suggest something more profound, a test which would demonstrate the proximity or distance of a local church from its Center in Jesus Christ (Berkhof: 1979, 409). They searched for a new paradigm of the Church which would help them verify the presence or absence in fact and in reality of the Church's essential relationship to Jesus Christ. G. C. Berkouwer explains,

The four words (one, holy, catholic, apostolic) were never disputed, since the Reformers did not opt for other "attributes." There is a common attachment everywhere to the description of the Church in the Nicene Creed...Whether the Church is truly one and catholic, apostolic and holy, is not asked; rather, a number of marks are mentioned, viz. the pure preaching of the gospel, the pure administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of church discipline...The decisive point is this: the Church is and must remain subject to the authority of Christ, to the voice of her Lord. And in this subjection she is tested by Him. That is the common Reformation motive underlying the *notae* (G.C. Berkouwer: 1976, 14-15.

So, for example, the Belgic Confession, defines the Church in article XXVII:

We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation and assembly of true Christian believers, expecting all their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by his blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost.

This is followed by article XXIX:

The marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin; in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the

only Head of the Church (See J.I. Packer: 1996, 58–64).

The Protestant Reformation was particularly interested in the Christian community's remaining close and faithful to Jesus Christ the Lord. Coupled with this concern for faithfulness to preaching, sacrament and discipline was a concern for what became known as "the priesthood of all believers:" the right, duty and privilege of all believers in the faith community to read and understand the Bible for themselves.

However, we must keep in mind that some things did not change. "On a crucial point the Reformers introduced no real change over against Rome: the area of the relationship between Church and state. This relationship was redefined in a more nuanced way, yet with little fundamental difference. The old, monolithic Christendom merely gave way to different fragments of Christendom, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican" (D. Bosch: 1980, 120). Mission and church growth were therefore relegated to duties of the governors and kings—essentially the same kind of institutional expansion that marked the pre-Reformation Roman church. Because the Reformation consisted essentially in a new, now fragmented form of Christendom, Protestantism became as culture-affirming and culturally-bound as the Roman church out of which it had come (See Clapp: 1996, 161). Eventually, it was to become as hierarchical and institutionalized as the mother church from which it had proceeded. "Whereas the Reformers largely succeeded in holding differing, almost contradictory elements in theology and practice in a dynamic, creative tension," David Bosch wrote, "their successors largely lost this ability. Increasingly, theology concentrated on the Church herself, especially on the past and on correct doctrine. The Reformation which began as a fresh wind and dynamic new movement foundered in preoccupation with establishing state churches, defining codes of pure doctrine, and conventional Christian conduct" (Bosch: 1980, 123–124).<sup>9</sup>

*B. Church Growth Is Growth In Churches Of The Word Who Confess Jesus Christ As Lord And Follow The Bible As Their Only Rule Of Faith And Practice.*<sup>10</sup>

Donald McGavran and the Church Growth Movement stand firmly in the theological heritage of the Reformation. When McGavran wrote his ecclesiology he included a paragraph that sounds very much like the Reformers of the Sixteenth Century.

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While in extraordinary circumstances it may be that our sovereign God saves men and women who have not heard of Christ, it is clear from the Bible that His plan of salvation, sealed in the blood of the Cross, is that men (and women) should be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. The Word is clear that there is "no other Name." Our Lord said plainly, "No one comes to the Father but by me." Saving faith in Christ means living in Him, in His Body, in His Church. The writer, therefore, holds that membership in a Church which confesses Christ before men (and women) and follows the Bible as the one sufficient and final rule of faith and practice is an essential completing step to saving faith (McGavran: 1979, 245).

So strong was McGavran's commitment to be faithful to the Scriptures and to Jesus Christ (*sola scriptura, solus Christus, sola gratia, sola fide, soli deo gloria*) that he refused to write off even the state churches of Western Europe if in fact the Gospel was being preached. In an open letter critiqueing J. C. Hoekendijk's pessimism about the church, McGavran wrote

You (Hoekendijk) insist that evangelism must not seek to reproduce the state churches of Europe...An evangelism which merely reproduced existing churches (European, American, or African) would certainly be less than ideal. But since both the state churches of Europe and the culture churches of America do transmit a knowledge of the Savior and the Holy Scriptures and have been used of God to raise up multitudes of Christian congregations in many lands, I would not dare call their evangelism "no evangelism." On the contrary, it appears to me to be genuine and good evangelism (McGavran, edit: 1972b, 58).

Here McGavran is demonstrating a clear dependence on the ecclesiology of the Reformation, testing the authenticity of the church and its evangelism on the basis of the proclamation of the Word and the faith in Jesus Christ.

Similar concerns drawing from the Protestant Reformation have been echoed lately by a number of folks like Douglas Webster (1992), John MacArthur (1993), Alister McGrath (1996), Michael Horton (See John Armstrong, edit: 1996, 245-265; James

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Boice and Benjamin Sasse: 1996, 99–130), Stanley Grenz (1993), David Wells (see James Boice and Benjamin Sasse: 1996, 25–42), and Mark Noll (1994). Some among them have been critical of the American Church Growth Movement because of their appropriate concern over faithfulness to the “solas” of Scripture and true faith in Jesus Christ. Donald McGavran and the Church Growth Movement have shared this concern from the beginning. Today it would do well for us in the Church Growth Movement to call for continued watchfulness in being reformed according to the Word of God—but always in terms of contextually-appropriate change and transformation that holds the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. As Alister McGrath wrote recently,

The slogan *ecclesia reformata, ecclesia semper reformanda* (the reformed church is a church that must always be reforming itself) is thus of vital importance to evangelicalism in its continuing quest for identity, for it shows that reformation is a continuous process of correlating Scripture and the issues of today, rather than a slavish repetition of yesterday’s solutions (McGrath: 1995, 115–116).

This leads to us to the fourth perspective, since the Protestant Reformation was challenged by the Radical Reformation specifically in terms of a lived-out faith and a personal confession by the believers.

#### *4. The Church As A Gathering Of The Faithful: A The Radical Reformation, Confessional Perspective*

##### *A. The Perspective*

The Radical Reformation, Pietism, Wesleyanism, the subsequent holiness movements, and then Pentecostalism and the later Charismatic Movement have something in common. They called for the personal, adult confession by each individual of that person’s faith in Jesus Christ—and they expect a demonstration of that in the way those persons live. For them, the Church is a gathering of individuals who have professed such faith and live it out. The personal faith is primary and ecclesiological corporateness is secondary. The local congregation as the gathering of individuals of faith is primary, the larger association of many such congregations is secondary.

Thus the Radical Reformation took the emphases of the Pro-

testant Reformers to their logical and consistent conclusion. David Bosch describes this perspective.

The Anabaptists (as compared to the Reformers) pushed aside with consistent logic every other manifestation of Christianity to date; the entire world, including Catholic and Protestant church leaders and rulers, consisted exclusively of pagans. All of Christianity was apostate; all had rejected God's truth. In addition, Catholics and Protestants alike had seduced humanity and introduced a false religion. Europe was once again a mission field. As at the time of the apostles, the Christian faith had to be introduced anew into a pagan environment. Their project was not the reformation of the existing church but the restoration of the original early Christian community of true believers. In their understanding, there was no difference between mission in "Christian" Europe and mission among non-Christians. The Reformers, however, could not really bring themselves to such a view...Anabaptists insisted on absolute separation between church and state and on nonparticipation in the activities of government. This naturally meant that church and state could under no circumstances whatsoever cooperate in mission (Bosch: 1991, 247, 246; see also 253-255).

The early Anabaptist and Radical Reformation would lead to the Pietist Movement and its strong commitment to mission and world evangelization, with an equally strong emphasis on individual salvation and personal confession of faith. The separation of church and state, the counter-cultural stance of the church as it faced both European and world contexts, and an emphasis on the "little flock" as being the few who were truly faithful to the Gospel (sometimes bordering on sectarianism) were characteristics of this perspective on the church.

*The Church Growth Movement Also Draws From This Perspective On The Church.*

*B. Church Growth Is Growth In The Number Of Women And Men Who Confess Their Faith As Disciples Of Jesus Christ.*

There is a sense in which Donald McGavran can be viewed as a Pietist, in spite of his strong ecclesiocentrism. "I do not see

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how we can get away from the institution—the Church,” he wrote. “(But) we can easily get too much institution. This I devoutly believe. I am a “free church” man as were my fathers before me. But the faith and some form of the Church are inextricably intertwined” (McGavran, edit: 1972, 59). Seven years later he would write, “The Church is made up of the redeemed who believe in Jesus Christ, live in Him, adore Him, and trust Him” (McGavran: 1979, 246).

Years later, Thom Rainer echoed this sentiment when he emphasized evangelism and conversion growth. “This book,” he wrote with regard to *Effective Evangelism*, “is a work on *evangelistic* growth, not just church growth. As I read again through my rather extensive church growth library, I realized that none of the works had devoted themselves to the study of leading *conversion* growth churches. I am first a student of evangelism before church growth because the biblical priority is a new life in Christ rather than the relative size of a church” (Rainer: 1996, 1).

The Church Growth Movement also draws from the heritage of the Radical Reformation when it stresses the importance of conversion growth, as well as when it emphasizes the value of high-commitment churches. It looks almost Pietist when it insists that membership in the church should be based on personal confession, no nominal attendance (see, e.g., Kent Hunter in Wagner, Arn and Towns edits: 1986, 91–96). Church Growth drew from evangelistic movements like *Evangelism in Depth* in Latin America and spawned others like DAWN (*Discipling a Whole Nation*).

But it seems important at the end of the Twentieth Century to ask whether a revivalist type of evangelism is still appropriate, given the fact that the Church now finds itself everywhere surrounded by contexts that are post-Christian and post-Christendom. Rodney Clapp writes,

The most prominent American evangelistic paradigm from the eighteenth century right into our day—revivalism—is a profoundly Constantinian approach to Christian mission...Revivalism aims to revive or revitalize the preexisting but now latent faith of birth-right Christians. It presupposes a knowledge of the languages and practices of faith...Revivalism as an evangelistic strategy made some sense as long as the nation was markedly influenced by Protestant Christian-

ity...Revivalist evangelism was not so much the presentation and unpacking of the faith to the uninitiated as it was an appeal to understandings and desires that supposedly already existed but were latent. To become Christians, people did not need to learn and participate in a new way of life embodied in a particular, visible community. They only needed to be individually aroused. They only needed to be reminded of what they already knew...

Thus to day many evangelists emphasize the inwardness of faith, stressing what the individual believes in his or her heart, isolating and appealing directly to the individual...Revivalism so concentrates on the moment of individual decision that those raised in revivalist traditions are often puzzled about what to do once they have made the decision to "accept Christ"...Privatizing and etherealizing faith, and altogether depending on the cultural formation of the surrounding society, revivalism inevitably "deteriorated into a technique for maintaining Christina America..."

Today's evangelism is marketing, and today's pastor is expected to be a marketer...When evangelism is marketing, God is nothing more than the guarantor (yes, the sponsor) of whatever the market has already determined is good and valuable. Accordingly, adopting marketing conceptuality and methodology turns the church into an instrument for enforcing prevailing American standards... In terms of evangelism (in today's post-Christian context), then, revivalism is not the route to follow. Better, more hopeful paths lead outside the territory, beyond the dreamscape, of Constantinianism (Clapp: 1996, 164-165).<sup>11</sup>

##### *5. Church As Culture-Bound Denomination: A U.S. Structural Perspective*

###### *A. The Perspective*

When Christians migrated from Europe to the United States they experienced a huge change from their being members of state churches (or free churches over-against state churches) in Europe to being part of a nation where people of all theological

stripes in Christianity were expected to live together. Immigrant Christianity in the U.S., therefore, created a whole new way of being church through the concept of denomination.

A quick review of American history would point to the fact that the church in the U.S. has been an immigrant church from its inception. Twenty-five years ago, Sydney Ahlstrom documented the rise of what were all essentially immigrant, ethnic churches in North America. In the American colonies, he speaks of the development of the English Puritans, the Dutch Reformed, the Quakers, the German Pietists, and the German Reformed and Lutheran churches. Later in his masterpiece on American church history Ahlstrom chronicles the rise of the Scottish Presbyterians and the mostly English Congregationalists (Ahlstrom: 1972, 121–471). The fact is that the history of Christianity in America is a history of ethnically-defined and culturally-shaped religion—although the Americanization of that is also part of the history, as, for example, in the case of early Methodism in the U.S.

The Great Migration of the nineteenth century drastically altered the religious composition of the American people. Steady acculturation was naturally a major feature of the passing decades, yet by the twentieth century the United States has become far more than before a nation of religious minorities whose self-consciousness was by no means rapidly disappearing. In 1926, by which time 40 percent of the population claimed a religious relationship, Roman Catholics were the largest single group (18,605,000), while the next three largest denominations—Baptist (8,011,000), Methodist (7,764,000) and Lutheran (3,226,000) accounted for 59 percent of Protestants (Ahlstrom: 1972, 517–518). Certainly, immigration is at least one of the most significant determinants of the nature of American religion, as historians like Winthrop Hudson (1965), Jerald Brauer (1953), and William Sweet (1930) have demonstrated. This special nature of American Christianity is such a strong feature that Martin Marty calls American Christians, “Pilgrims in Their Own Land.”<sup>12</sup>

Craig Van Gelder observes, “The emergence of denominations in North America is something of an historical accident. The multiple streams of European Christianity commingled within the emerging colonies forced these churches into a new pattern for relating to each other. As Martin Marty has observed, the formation, legitimization, and expansion of this new form of church represented one of the most significant shifts in the life of the institutional church in over fourteen hundred years” (Darnel

Guder, edit.: 1998, 63, quoting from Marty: 1970, 67–68).

C. Peter Wagner highlighted this unique feature of religion in the U.S. in his major work that deals with homogeneity and ethnicity in North America, *Our Kind of People* (1979).<sup>13</sup> Wagner draws from Richard Niebuhr's work.

In *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, written in 1929, Niebuhr perceptively traces the origins of U.S. denominations to cultural, rather than distinctly religious causes. He shows that the denominations, churches, sects, are sociological groups whose principle of differentiation is to be sought in their conformity to the order of social classes and castes. He does not deny that denominations are religious groups. Of course they are. But they also represent a religion that has accommodated itself to what he terms the caste system. What Niebuhr describes is what the proponents of the homogeneous unit principle would have predicted in America or any other nation composed of more than one culture (Wagner: 1979, 23–24; quoting from Niebuhr: 1929, 25).

So in the U.S. there developed essentially a new tacit ecclesiology over-laying the more official ecclesiologies of the various theological traditions originating in Europe. In this new ecclesiology, the concept of state churches had not place. Yet these Christians still maintained, to some extent, an assumption of Christendom's medieval synthesis where all of life is impacted by one's religious affiliation—but now this was fragmented along one's culture derived from place of origin, coupled with one's particular theological tradition. So this was still a culture-affirming Christianity on the part of those who represented European state-church traditions—and softly counter-cultural on the part of those who came from European "free-church" traditions.

Donald Posterski affirms that, "Christianity and North American culture are inseparable. Like mixing together different kinds of coffee beans and then passing them through a grinder, Christianity and culture have been blended together. Separation of church and state may be an operational premise for the courts to ponder, but the fact remains that life in North America cannot be understood without computing the pervasive influence of the Christian faith...Separating Christians from the culture and the

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culture from Christians may be more difficult than ungrinding the coffee beans" (Posterski: 1989, 81

What is most striking in the denominational perspective of ecclesiology is the institutional and organizational structure that this develops, which I observed earlier in perspective # 2. As U.S. corporations were born, following the model of Henry Ford and the auto industry, so denominations also began to look like—and do their business as—corporations. Congregations then began to look like branch offices of a corporation; theological education became the training of the managers of the corporation's branch offices; and church planting involved opening new branch offices of the corporation. The "corporation" model of denomination probably peaked somewhere around the late 1950's. No functional substitute has yet been found. What is clear is that the view of the Church as a denominational corporation faces an uncertain future in the post-modern, post-Christian and post-Christendom reality of the United States today. The implications of this perspective in terms of American Church Growth are numerous.

*B. Church Growth Is Growth In Congregations Joined Together In Denominations And Associations.*

First, we must recognize that up until the recent rise of "post-denominational" congregations, with few exceptions, the growth of the church in the U.S. has been dominated by the world of denominations. There has been an excellent and appropriate cooperation between American Church Growth advocates and those in the denominations charged with planting new churches and helping older churches grow. This has been as true for my denomination as for others, including many represented by those of us attending this conference. But have we stopped long enough to think through the ecclesiological implications of this close cooperation? How much do we confuse ecclesiastics with ecclesiology?

Yet the New Testament has no knowledge of denominations. In fact, biblically and theologically it seems appropriate to state the obvious: denominations as such do not grow—congregations grow as persons become disciples of Jesus Christ and responsible members of Christ's church. Yet it has been too easy to ignore what we know and assume that our denomination is the be-all and end-all of being Church—to equate too closely the concept of Church with our denomination. In his work on *The*

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*Church*, Edmund Clowney highlighted this danger.

Denominational division in the organized church and the quasi-denominational consensus in evangelicalism have caused unfortunate misunderstandings. Denominational churches may each think of themselves as Christ's church on earth, giving little thought to the claims of other denominations, though acknowledging them as true churches. They may look on parachurch groups as irregular, a threat to ecclesiastical order and to church finances. Local churches have sometimes taught that all the offerings of church members should be channelled through the church, with the expenditures regulated by church officers. A variant of this attitude was seen when the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA, declared in 1935 that it was as necessary to give to the established agencies of the church as to come to the Lord's Table...

The growth of the evangelical "mega-church," particularly in the United States and South Korea, raises a new issue in denominationalism. Such a church, with thousands or even hundreds of thousands of members, becomes a virtual denomination, usually under the strong leadership of one senior pastor. Again the problem can arise: the mega-church may conduct its affairs as though it were the church universal, viewing with suspicion or lack of interest those outside its fellowship (Edmund Clowney: 1995, 23–24).

Should we equate denominational growth—or even growth in the number of branch offices of the denominational corporation—with the growth of the Church of Jesus Christ? Intuitively we all know this is biblical and theologically inappropriate. Yet in the way we conduct our day-to-day church-growth activities, we may be nearer to such an equation than we think.

Yet Church Growth theory has another, nearly opposite side to this: ecumenicity. After the Second World War, the denominational fragmentation in North America, and the reduced impact in society of state and free churches in Europe gave rise to the need for ecumenical pathways of cooperation and unity. Since the mid-1960's, the World Council of Churches has been critical of McGavran and Church Growth. Yet from its inception, the Church Growth Movement has worked with all denominations,

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and bridged between them in many ways. In fact, if by “ecumenical” we mean cooperation between and among the churches who share one faith in Jesus Christ and seek together to proclaim the Gospel throughout the whole inhabited earth (the oecumene) “so that the world may believe,”<sup>14</sup> it may be accurate to say that the most ecumenical movement of this century in North America has been the Church Growth Movement. Listen to how McGavran articulated this.

I hold that the Church of Jesus Christ is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally One. Its three dominant symbols are: the Bride of Christ, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of Christ. It has one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, one Book, one goal, and one Judge. Since the churches that compose the One Church are made up of very different races and kinds and conditions of men and women, these embodied churches take many different forms. As within the supreme authority of the Bible many interpretations seem reasonable to Christians facing different conditions, so a variety of somewhat different doctrines and polities are espoused. This diversity is abundantly allowable within the overarching unity of the Church represented by biblical symbols. Yet Christ is not divided; neither in the mind of God or His people.

If one may use an analogy, there is one granite rock in the world. Granite is granite wherever found. Yet there are many different kinds—pink, white, gray, green, and black; coarse-grained and fine-grained; New England granite, Canadian granite, Zairian granite, Mongolian granite, and so on.

The unity of Christians is not demanded by the biblical revelation. The diversity is that required by local conditions and conditioned by historical background, language spoken, cultural peculiarities, economic situation, and the like...The unity of the Church is unity *in Christ*. He is Head of the Church—the only Head (the Church) has.<sup>15</sup>

Clearly the issues of denominationalism (and this applies equally to the newer forms of church that have arisen in North America during the last thirty years), the matter of the unity of the one Church of Jesus Christ, and a deeper understanding of

diversity are ecclesiological agendas crying for our attention in a post-Christian and post-modern land that is culturally and denominationally more diverse than ever. The next five perspectives are viewpoints that have arisen in the last one hundred years, each of which may help us understand more clearly the issues we have seen up until now.

6. *Church As Three-Self Formula: A 19th-Century Administrative Perspective*

A. *The Perspective*

From the early 1500's to the middle of the 1800's the principle paradigm of the church in mission involved the churches of Western Europe and North America "planting" the church in Africa, Asia and Latin America. With notable exceptions, this era could be described as a colonial competition in church cloning by Western forms of Christendom. Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) described this perspective well when he spoke of the goal of mission being (a) the conversion of people, (b) the planting of the church, and (c) the glory of God. But Voetius was a child of his time. That which was planted was mostly carbon-copies of the Western forms of ecclesiastical structures, Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant.

So while denominations were taking shape in the U.S., their world mission programs were exporting the denomination in their world mission ventures around the world. And comity agreements notwithstanding, they "planted" new denominations that looked allot like clones of the mother churches. Two mission administrators: Henry Venn representing the English Anglican state-church perspective and Rufus Anderson representing the U.S. denominational perspective became concerned about this situation and offered what they considered a way out: the "Three-Self Formula."

An alternative paradigm emerged around the middle of the 1800's when Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson proposed the "Three-Self Formula" as a way for the churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America to become autonomous and independent. "By his 'three-self formula' (Rufus) Anderson was reacting to the pietistic view which emphasized individual salvation to the neglect of church-building and to the trend of building native churches as 'colonial outposts of Western churches.' He strongly opposed ecclesiastical colonialism which is more than satisfied

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to make carbon copies of Western churches in Asia, Africa, and among the Indians" (J. Verkuyl: 1978, 64; see also 52–53).

Dominating mission theory and practice for the next hundred years, the formula stated that churches were mature when they became self-supporting economically, self-governing structurally and self-propagating locally. R. Pierce Beaver observed that "There was no rival theory of missions set forth in North America during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century" (Beaver: 1967, 5). The formula became "the common possession of virtually every mission agency throughout the entire world" (Verkuyl: 1978, 185). With heavy stress on institution and organization, the formula unfortunately tended to produce self-centered, self-preoccupied, selfish national churches that often turned in upon themselves and demonstrated little commitment or vision for world evangelization.<sup>16</sup>

*B. Church Growth Is Growth In Self-Supporting, Self-Propagating And Self-Governing Congregations.*

The "three-self formula" exerted a powerful influence on the way Church Growth theory has viewed the Church. In his discussions with J.C. Hoekendijk, McGavran wrote, "

You are emphatic that evangelism is not planting churches. You say, "It is impossible to think of the *plantatio ecclesiae* as the end of evangelism." I could not help but think of the father of the ecumenical movement, John R. Mott, who with Robert E. Speer and Robert Wilder trumpeted abroad for decades that the basic purpose of Christian mission was the establishment of self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing churches...Hence my insistence that the aid of evangelism is the planting of churches (McGavran: 1972b, 59).

Alan Tippett affirmed that, "In many ways we could claim (Henry) Venn as an early church growth writer. Many of the things he emphasized by insight, we now know to be true on a basis of church growth studies. In the principles of selfhood as he stated it both quantitative and organic growth are well provided for and qualitative growth is clearly implied, if not directly stated" (A.R. Tippett: 1969, 133). Alan Tippett understood the "three-selves" as being "different ways of looking at a whole Church," and so he developed six "marks of an indigenous Church." These are a type of paraphrase of the Venn-Anderson

formula. They serve to point to those windows by which the complete, mature Church may be found on any soil (Ibid).

I will not belabor the point here that the “three-self formula” has also influenced the way the American Church Growth movement and denominational church-planting programs have viewed the church during the past three decades. Since the early 1970’s, my denomination, for example, has accepted it with little critique as its goal of church-planting in North America. Within five years of its inception, every new church start had to be able to buy around 5 acres of property, support its own pastor, and have enough members (around 150 or so) to govern and lead itself. So during the last thirty years, following Church Growth theory, my denomination has found it must plant churches mostly among people in suburbia who live in homes with 2 1/2 bathrooms! Because they are the only people who can support a 3-self congregation like that within five years.

But the formula was a much too functional definition of the Church. It demonstrated the outward signs of the Church’s vitality in meeting the conditions of the mission’s or denomination’s program parameters, but it did not demonstrate the inner qualities related to the faith of the members. Invariably, the “3-Self Formula” has been applied by a mission agency or denomination to its new churches and new mission endeavors – but seldom have the sending agencies and denominations had the courage to apply the “formula” to themselves.

### *7. Church As Mission: A 20th-Century Missional Perspective*

#### *A. The Perspective*

The tendency toward introversion of three-self churches fueled the search for what became a major paradigm of the church’s self-understanding: indigenous national churches in mission. Beginning at the turn of the century in places like India, Korea, Brazil and Mexico, churches all around the globe began to see themselves as equal partners with the sending churches. Missiologists like John Nevius and Roland Allen were calling for what Allen termed, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*. By the 1920’s, the term “daughter churches” was used to refer to the churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In 1931, Emil Brunner wrote his famous saying, “The Church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning” (E. Brunner: 1931, 108; quoted, for example, by Jan Jongeneel: 1997, 88).

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By 1938 at the International Missionary Council (IMC) meeting in Tambaram, Madras, India, the "older" churches and "younger" ones stressed a mission-oriented view of the church. The record of this conference, *The World Mission of the Church* shows the delegates wrestling with the intimate relationship of church and mission. That same year Hendrik Kraemer called for churches to move *From Missionfield to Independent Church*.

Along with indigeneity, the missionary nature of the church was increasingly being emphasized. Those attending the 1952 IMC meeting in Willingen, Germany, affirmed that "there is no participation in Christ without participation in his mission to the world" (*The Missionary Obligation of the Church*, 3). The most complete development of this view was Johannes Blauw's *The Missionary Nature of the Church*, published in 1962, one year before the newly-formed Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches met in Mexico City, emphasizing "mission on six continents." The 1960's were a time of the birth of nations, particularly in Africa, terminating colonial domination by Europe. These movements began to recognize that the "national churches," the churches in each nation, had a responsibility to evangelize their own nations. The church was missionary in its nature and local in its outreach. The Roman Catholics after Vatican Council II were seeing the church as missionary in its essential nature, sent to all the peoples of the earth: *Ad Gentes*.

During the last forty years, the world has changed as has the world church. Today over two-thirds of all Christians live south of the equator. Christianity can no longer be considered a Western religion. Western Europe and North America are increasingly seen as mission fields. And a new view of the church as a *Missional Church* is being advocated.<sup>17</sup> Nominalism and secularization contributed to these formerly mission-sending areas becoming mostly post-Christian. Meanwhile, mission-sending from the south has increased to such an extent that today more cross-cultural missionaries are being sent and supported by the churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America than from Europe and North America. Thus since the 1970's the missionary nature of the Church has meant that churches and mission agencies are called to partner together in a reciprocal flow of world evangelization that criss-crosses the globe. Thus the church's nature and forms of existence have been radically re-shaped by mission.

Although we know that the ideas are distinct, it is impossi-

ble to understand church without mission. Mission activity is supported by the church, carried out by members of the church, and the fruits of mission are received by the church. On the other hand, the church lives out its calling in the world through mission, finds its essential purpose in its participation in God's mission, and engages in a multitude of activities whose purpose is mission. "Just as we must insist that a church which has ceased to be a mission has lost the essential character of a church, so we must also say that a mission which is not at the same time truly a church is not a true expression of the divine apostate. An unchurchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an unmissionary church" (L. Newbigin: 1954, 169).

*B. Church Growth Is Growth In Missionary Congregations.*

C. Peter Wagner is representative of the Church Growth Movement in its emphasis on the missionary nature of the church.

The Christian church (he writes) came into being as a redemptive fellowship. The church gathers men and women together in community and in mutual commitment. It is a group of people who perceive themselves to be God's people, who have been redeemed, and who claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ. The basic internal purpose of the church is to provide for the Christian growth and mutual care of its members. Externally its basic purpose is to communicate God's redemptive work to fellow human beings and to society as a whole. The latter has been called "the missionary nature of the church," (citing J. Blauw: 1962) and the responsibility of the church toward the world has been most commonly termed its mission. From the Latin root meaning "to send," mission is intended to include everything that God sends his people into the world to do. Two major dimensions of the mission of the church include what have been called the Great Commission and the Great Commandment (Wagner: 1979, 17).

McGavran has been followed by virtually every major thinker in the Church Growth Movement in basing themselves on the Great Commission as the biblical foundation of a missionary perspective on the church (see also Van Engen: 1991, 78-80). Somehow this most fundamental dimension of Church

Growth ecclesiology is often missed by the critics of the Church Growth Movement. At its most foundational, Church Growth is an integrative, coherent and consistent missiology that views the essential nature of the Church as missionary. Take out this missionary dimension and Church Growth theory crumbles. The missionary nature of the church propelled McGavran and the Church Growth Movement to pay close attention to matters of indigeneity.

*8. Church As Indigenous: A 1940's To 1960's Culturally-Appropriate Perspective*

*A. The Perspective*

John Nevius, Roland Allen, Mel Hodges (drawing from Allen), Donald McGavran and others began calling for "indigenous churches" communions, organisms and fellowships that would be culturally appropriate to their contexts. Jim Scherer of the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago pointed out that "indigeneity" is something which should never have been lost—the Church is the people in every culture and locality, and thus cannot be anything but indigenous. "Something is 'indigenous,'" he said, "when it produces, grows, or lives naturally in a country or locality...Wherever God gathers his people, he establishes the church of Jesus Christ for that place" (Scherer: 1964, 78).

Since the 1960's, the indigenous, culturally-conditioned nature of the church has been in the forefront of missiological consciousness, stimulated by the explosion of the church in thousands of different cultures and languages world-wide. Where the church is a church of the soil, it has grown dramatically. Where the church has remained a foreign transplant, like in Japan, the church has not grown.

*B. Church Growth Is Growth In Culturally-Aware, Relevant, Indigenous Congregations.*

Indigeneity is a major part of the foundation of Church Growth. McGavran's early interest in "people movements" draws from the prevailing concern for indigeneity. The subsequent development of the "Homogeneous Unit" perspective in Church Growth is based on assumptions that the church in its essence is to be indigenous to the culture in which it is planted. McGavran worked very early with people like Mel Hodges to articulate principles of indigeneity in church and mission devel-

opment. McGavran invited Alan Tippett and later Charles Kraft and others to help him bring anthropological and sociological insights to bear on questions of contextualization with a view to increasing the indigenesness of the church.

Already in 1955, McGavran wrote in *Bridges of God* that there were “five great advantages” of people movements over what he called “the mission station approach.”

First, they have provided the Christian movement with permanent churches rooted in the soil of hundreds of thousands of villages.... (Second, they have the advantage of being naturally indigenous...People movements have a third major advantage. With them, “the spontaneous expansion of the Church” is natural....<sup>18</sup> (Fourth), these movements have enormous possibilities of growth...The fifth advantage is that these (people) movements provide a sound pattern of becoming Christian... (McGavran: 1955, 88-92).

To a large extent, the Church Growth’s interest in generational studies, in “seeker-sensitive” church planting, and in contextualization are products of this commitment to indigenity. This quality of the Church Growth Movement does not seem to be understood sufficiently or appreciated by some critics of the Church Growth Movement.

### *9. Church As Integral: A 1960’s To 1980’s Wholistic And Systemic Perspective*

#### *A. The Perspective*

This question about the Church’s nature in relation to new realities of our world was squarely faced by Bonhoeffer when he asked about the relation between the “*communio sanctorum*” viewed as a sociological entity of world society and the “*sanctorum communio*” viewed as the spiritual fellowship of the followers of Jesus.<sup>19</sup> Though it cannot be said that everyone who came after Bonhoeffer followed him in his approach to ecclesiology, yet his work marks the beginning of a new perspective in the theology of the Church. This new viewpoint continually wrestled with holding together both sides of the Church’s nature—the empirical and sociological on the one hand, the a-priori, biblical and theological on the other. This brought about a desire to view the church as “both-and,” made up of comple-

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mentary qualities.

When Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote *The Communion of Saints*, it marked the beginning of a radical change in perspective concerning the Church. Until Bonhoeffer wrote his dissertation, ecclesiology pretty much involved an a-priori, logical, scholastic thought process. The Church was defined and explained with such logic and reason that it had no recognizable basis in real congregations situated in the real world. Whether it be the Holy Roman Empire, the Orthodox churches, the Reformers, or the Anabaptists, they all defined the Church by certain logical, ordered, systematic definitions derived (sometimes) from Scripture, and often from logical constructs resulting from other aspects of theology. Even the Reformation, for example, had no way of empirically knowing (or defining) what “pure preaching of the Word”, “right administration of the sacraments” or “the proper exercise of church discipline” meant in real practice. Witness the great divisions of Protestantism at that time, and the use of the marks of the Church to defend one’s own church as “true”, and all others as something less than “true”. The logical, a-priori aspect of ecclesiology created a very serious chasm between fact and fiction, between idea and reality, between what should be and what is. The result was that ecclesiology ended up having two separate sides or natures: the “visible” church which was far less than what it should be, but at least verifiable—and the “invisible” church which was truly ideal and perfect, but which could not be found in the real world.

Toward the beginning of the Twentieth Century the question of the nature of the Church began to take on new meaning and new form in relation to new, and urgent questions regarding the Church’s nature in terms of its mission in the world. Much of this questioning came to the fore through Gustav Warneck’s writings,<sup>20</sup> and later in the International Missionary Council (IMC) conference of Madras, India, in 1937,<sup>21</sup> as well as at Willingen, 1952; Evanston, 1954; and Ghana, 1957. These were really new questions, for they came out of a perspective at once theological and Biblical, but not out of a-priori, logical assumptions. Rather, they arose out of consideration of the real place of the real Church in the real world. These questions arose in response to a number of forces calling for a new vision of the Church in relation to its mission.

*Forces for Change in Modern Ecclesiology*

We could briefly summarize some of the forces that have demonstrated the need for a new way of thinking in modern ecclesiology.

1. The great world missionary conference of Edinburgh, 1910, the rise of the International Missionary Council, and the global Christian missionary movement demonstrated the need to understand the Church's nature as a fruit of mission through the perspective of mission.
2. The capitulation to the forces of evil, particularly by the European churches during World War II, demanded a re-thinking about their role in society.
3. As the Church came to exist in all six continents, the tremendous diversity of cultural forms and styles of the churches called for a re-examination of many of the older assumptions and definitions about the Church.<sup>22</sup>
4. The rise of the WCC and the National Christian Councils necessitated asking some very searching questions about the nature of the Church in terms of defining some very diverse movements in the world for the sake of their membership in these councils. Because they were councils of CHURCHES, it was important to know the criteria on which various groups could or could not be accepted as members. The African independent churches, the Oceania cargo cults and prophet movements, the Latin American "base ecclesial communities", socially-active faith communities like Sojourners in Washington, D.C., and the gay church in the U.S. are just a few examples of the ecclesiological stretching involved in admitting these groups to membership in the councils of CHURCHES.<sup>23</sup>
5. Our radically shrunken global village, the rise of the Third World nations, the increased facility in travel, and the increase in communications have called for the Church to be a global Christian community, relevant to global issues in an unprecedented way.
6. The rise of "faith missions" after the Second World War, with their "interdenominational" or "non-denominational" make-up has forced many to ask some very searching questions about the nature of the Church. Since 1900 David Barrett counts "15,800 distinct and separate parachurch agencies serving the churches in their mis-



sion through manifold ministries in the 223 countries of the world, yet organizationally independent of the churches."<sup>24</sup> The relationship of these agencies to the "Church", their own nature as "Church", and the rise of many converts as a result of their work (the converts themselves becoming a "national church") has called for re-examination and new definitions concerning the nature of the Church. It was impossible to say that these "para-church" agencies (or "sodalities", using Ralph Winter's terminology) were not a part of the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church;" yet the confessional and organizational make-up of their membership was very different from the traditional churches as known throughout previous church history.

7. The world-wide development of what at one time were called "younger" churches in the Third World from "mission" to "church" has given rise to new sets of issues and questions in relation to appropriate ecclesiology in the Third World.<sup>25</sup>
8. The post-Vatican Council II ecclesiology articulated, for example in *"Lumen Gentium"* and *"Ad Gentes"*, stressed the Church as the "People of God", and has given rise to a broad-based re-examination of Roman Catholic ecclesiology.<sup>26</sup>
9. The rise in the United States of faith communities with high personal commitment of the members to each other, a communal style of living, a strong social activism, and new forms of worship and common life has demonstrated the breadth of forms and the depth of involvement possible in the Church.
10. The rise of the mega-churches, including the emerging of the New Apostolic Paradigm or "post-denominational" churches which have begun developing entirely new forms of being and doing church in local and global contexts.<sup>27</sup>

These and other forces have contributed to a Twentieth-Century perspective on the church that incorporates and affirms a series of seemingly contradictory characteristics. When we try to describe the church we are immediately caught in a tension between the sociological and theological views of the church. The church is both divine and human, created by the Holy Spirit

yet brought about by gathering human beings. The tension can be illustrated by mentioning five complementary couplets. The church is not either one or the other of these—it is both, simultaneously.

1) *The church is both form and essence.*

What we believe to be the “essence” of the Church is not seen in its forms. We believe the church to be one, yet it is divided; to be holy, yet it is the communion of sinners. We believe the essence of discipleship is love, yet we experience actions in the church that are far from loving.

2) *The church is both phenomenon and creed.*

The church is to be believed. But what is believed is not seen. That which is perceived as a phenomenon of the visible world does not present itself as the object of our faith. The church is too often not believable. We could also use the words “Real-Ideal” or “Relevance-Transcendence” to represent this seeming contradiction. We cannot be members of an “ideal” Church apart from the “real” one. The real must always be challenged and called by the ideal; the ideal must be understood and lived out in the real world.

3) *The church is both institution and community; organization and organism.*

During the Middle Ages, the exclusively institutional view of the church took on its most extreme form. In reaction, the Sixteenth-Century Reformers emphasized the church as fellowship and communion. Many people feel today that we need to seek to keep both elements in equal perspective, especially when it comes to missionary cooperation between churches and mission agencies. The church is both institution and community. The community invariably, and necessarily, takes on institutional form; the institution only exists as the concrete expression of the communion of persons.

4) *The church is both visible and invisible.*

The visible-invisible distinction has been used as a way to get around some of the difficulties involved in the first three paradoxes presented above. The visible-invisible distinction, though not explicitly found in the New Testament, was proposed in the early centuries of the Church’s life. The visible/invisible distinction is with us because of the reality of the Church as a mixture of holiness and sinfulness (For example, see the Parable of the Tares in Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43). The distinction is important, but perhaps it must be remembered that there is one

church, not two. "The one church, in its essential nature and in its external forms alike, is always at once visible and invisible" (H. Berkhof. *Christian Faith*, 399).

5) *The church is both imperfect and perfect.*

Luther spoke of the church as "*simul justus, simul peccator*" seeing it as simultaneously just and sinful, holy and unrighteous, universal and particular. But the church is not therefore justified to remain sinful, divided, and particular. "Faith in the holiness of the church, Moltmann said, "can no more be a justification of its unholy condition than the justification of sinners means a justification of sin" (Moltmann, *The Church in the Power*, 22-23). The local congregation derives its essential nature only as it authentically exhibits the nature and characteristics of the universal Church. And, the universal Church is experienced by women and men, witnesses to the world who give observable shape to the church only as it is manifested in local churches.

Hendrikus Berhof called for a special visibility to see and recognize the Church. The church, he said, has a three-fold character, being related (a) to God as the new covenant community of the Holy Spirit, (b) to the believers as the communion of saints, and (c) simultaneously as the apostolic Church sent to the world (H. Berkhof. *Christian Faith*, 344-345). The missionary movement has been the arena where this three-fold character has been given concrete shape as the church has spread over the globe, comprising now over one-third of all humanity.

*B. Church Growth Is Integral Growth Of Wholistic, Healthy Congregations.*

C. Peter Wagner has worked extensively from this viewpoint of the church. His "Seven Vital Signs" and his "Eight Pathologies" can be found re-printed a number of times and restated in many different ways all through Church Growth literature. They are central to Church Growth theory and represent not only an organic view of the church but also an integrated, wholistic, and systemic perspective on the Church. However, I believe one of the most integral perspectives on the Church was offered by one who considered himself a friendly critic of Church Growth, with emphasis on the friendly: Orlando Costas. Costas stated that healthy, vibrant churches should simultaneously exhibit five kinds of growth: spiritual, numerical, organic, conceptual and incarnational.

By *spiritual growth* is meant the depth and breadth of the covenantal relationship of the People of God in intimate spiritual closeness with God, through faith in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit; i.e., the depth of spiritual maturity of leaders and members, their degree of immersion in Scripture, their living out of a life-style and ethics of the Kingdom of God, their involvement in prayer, their dependence of God, their search for holiness, and their vibrancy in worship (This fifth aspect of the church's integral growth has been added by C. Van Engen to Costas' other four).

By *numerical expansion* is understood the recruitment of persons for the kingdom of God by calling them to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their lives and their incorporation into a local community of persons who, having made a similar decision, worship, obey, and give witness, collectively and personally, to the world of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ and his liberating power.

By *organic expansion* is meant the internal development of a local community of faith, i.e., the system of relationships among its members—its form of government, financial structure, leadership, types of activities in which its time and resources are invested, etc.

By *conceptual expansion* is meant the degree of consciousness that a community of faith has with regard to its nature and mission to the world, i.e., the image that the community has formed of itself, the depth of its reflection on the meaning of its faith in Christ (understanding of Scripture, etc.), and its image of the world.

By *incarnational growth* is meant the degree of involvement of a community of faith in the life and problems of its social environment; i.e., its participation in the affliction of its world; its prophetic, intercessory, and liberating action on behalf of the weak and destitute; the intensity of its preaching to the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed (Lk. 4:18-21).<sup>28</sup>

*10. Church As Innovative: A 1970's To 1990's Receptor-Oriented Perspective*

*A. Perspective*

It goes almost without saying that the Church in North America has demonstrated a remarkable ability to change and innovate during the last three hundred years. Peter Jennings, in the television program, "In the Name of God," was accurate when he stated that, "the church in North America has always been innovative." But this innovation has been especially striking, rapid and surprising during the last twenty years. No one in the 1960's or even the 1970's thought single congregations could reach sizes of tens of thousands. Now we have a word for that: "mega-churches." Who in the 1960's could have predicted phenomena like the Vineyard and Willow Creek. Cell-based churches have arisen during this same time. And who could have predicted the rise of the New Apostolic Paradigm churches. And who would have thought that the songs of the Jesus People would mark the beginning in a veritable revolution in church music and worship during the last thirty years. What about multi-media churches where the synthesizer and Power Point software have taken the place of the organ and the hymnbook? What of the explosive growth of newer ethnic churches in North America like the Taiwanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, South Indian, Hispanic, and African American churches?

I don't need to go on, because a number of these and other examples will come up during these couple of days we are together at this conference. The changes and innovations have been so remarkable that it is little wonder there are now those who are becoming nostalgic for the past, for Orthodox worship, for rational propositions, and the singing of the old hymns.

*B. Church Growth Theory*

Church Growth Movement has been shaped by a love of innovation. I need mention only the impact on the movement of the Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions, the Third Wave, John Wimber, the mega-churches, and now the New Apostolic Paradigm churches to demonstrate the close relationship of Church Growth theory and innovation. How do we continue to affirm such free-wheeling innovation while at the same time keeping a firm hold on the most foundational essence of the Church's na-

ture?

One way I am exploring is by drawing from the vision of Acts 1:8 and then affirming all the innovative ways such a vision can take concrete shape in today's multitude of different contexts.

*THE VISION:*

Acts 1:8 is seen as a carefully articulated vision of the Church's mission on the part of Luke and the early church as to how to be God's Missionary People in their context. Some illustrative examples for our contexts in North America:

*THAT VIBRANT CONGREGATIONS SHOULD BE IN MISSION IN:*

*JERUSALEM:*

That VIBRANT congregations would start at least two new ministries in the church's closest contexts during the next year.

*JUDAEA:*

That VIBRANT congregations would parent at least one new offspring church to nurture during the next three years to the year 2000, in conjunction and cooperation with classis and particular synod, assisted by denominational staff.

*SAMARIA:*

That VIBRANT congregations would partner with another church/churches in 1 new transformational ministry someplace in Canada, USA or Mexico, preferably in the city with older-churches-in-transitional-neighborhoods (OCTNs) during the next 3 years.

*THE ENDS OF THE EARTH:*

That VIBRANT congregations would develop 1 new global partnership with another congregation or ministry where members and leaders can be personally involved each year during the next 3 years. in conjunction and cooperation with long-term missionaries in the area, and assisted by denominational or mission-agency staff.

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*THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY*

Lesslie Newbigin hinted at this kind of innovational approach to being church when he spoke about the local congregation being the “hermeneutic of the gospel.” By this he meant that those outside the church would read and understand the Gospel only as they saw it lived out in vibrant local congregations of Christians in their midst. He called for an integrative approach to a missionary ecclesiology by describing the characteristics of a missionary congregation.

The primary reality of which we have to take account in seeking for a Christian impact on public life is the Christian congregation...The only hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it...This community will have, I think, the following six characteristics:

1. It will be a community of praise.
2. It will be a community of truth.
3. It will be a community that does not live for itself.
4. It will be a community...sustained in the exercise of the priesthood in the world.
5. It will be a community of mutual responsibility.
6. It will be a community of hope.”<sup>29</sup>

*Conclusion*

Congregations that fit the description Newbigin has offered will be congregations that experience wholistic, integral growth. My thesis in this essay has been this: *Church Growth ecclesiology represents an innovative and integrated combination of at least ten perspectives on the church that can be found in the history of the church.* Clearly, each of the ten perspectives mentioned above has both positive and negative elements to it – and the next step in this reflection would be an evaluation (both theologically and contextually) of the pros and cons of such perspectives. But that will be left for another day. Today, we need to remind ourselves that into the next century, we in the Church Growth Movement must continue to find new ways to be biblically and theologically sound and at the same time methodologically innovative. Let’s keep asking the operative question of this conference, “What Kind of Church Does God Want to Grow?”

Writer

Van Engen, Charles. Address: Charles (Chuck) Van Engen was

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born and raised of missionary parents in Chiapas, Mexico, where from 1973 to 1985 he also served the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico in theological education, church growth training, evangelism, university and youth ministries, administration of a conference center, and refugee relief. During 1997-1998, he served as the elected President (moderator) of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. He is presently the Arthur F. Glasser Professor of Biblical Theology of Mission, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary.

#### NOTES

1. Attributed to Kraemer by Young Church delegates to the 1952 Willingen conference of the International Missionary Council. See *The Missionary Obligation of the Church*. London: Edinburgh House, 1952,, 40.

2. Adapted from Van Engen: 1995, 178-190.

3. There are two primary places where Donald McGavran explained his ecclesiology. These are as follows:

1. *Donald McGavran, "An Ecclesiological Point of View"*

Anyone describing the Church inevitably does so from a particular ecclesiological point of view, usually that of his (or her) own tradition. Observing the actual forms of the Church today, the churches described in the New Testament, and the essential nature of the Church according to the Bible, I have perforce developed an ecclesiology which I myself believe to be both realistic and biblical. It fits the many contemporary Churches and is faithful to the Scriptures.

I know that other Christians have other views, and readily grant that the flesh-and-blood Churches all over India may be described from several angles of perspective. But I would like to ask readers holding other ecclesiologies to remember my primary objective here: to describe the existing Churches—the Khasi-, Bengali-, Tamil-, and English-speaking clusters of congregations and so on—rather than to set forth and defend any particular ecclesiology or policy. One may grant, for instance, that congregations and denominations might be described from the point of view that the only true Church is in obedient relation to the Supreme Pontiff at Rome. But that is not the conviction of this writer, who must write from his own beliefs. The reader should rest comfortably in the knowledge that good Christians, on solid biblical grounds, do have different theoretical frameworks or ecclesiologies. One hopes that (readers) will not waste (their) time complaining about the "weak ecclesiology" of this volume [by which (they mean) one differ-



ent from (their) own], but rather let it show (them) the many kinds of congregations and denominations now composing the Christian scene in India.

The Church is made up of the redeemed who believe in Jesus Christ, live by Him, adore Him, and trust Him. It is not merely a gathering of good men and women engaged in moral pursuits. It is Christ's Body in conscious relationship to its Head. "As there is only one Christ and one Body, so there is only one ministry, that of Christ in His Body."

Some congregations have become so unconscious of a living relationship that it is open to questions whether they are truly of the Church or not; and few, moreover, live continuously at a high level of obedience and adoration. Persecuted churches may include believers who have quite literally not had the chance formally to confess faith in Jesus and be baptized. Some congregations include many persons who have not yet come to belief at all. Hence the Church, particularly as it forms on new ground, includes some congregations which may or may not be wholly within the true Church, and some members who may or may not be practicing Christians. While comparisons are odious, the widespread nominal church membership in the West may well give us pause and a moment of humility in this regard.

While in extraordinary circumstances it may be that our sovereign God saves men and women who have not heard of Christ, it is clear from the Bible that His plan of salvation, sealed in the blood of the Cross, is that men (and women) should be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. The Word is clear that there is "no other Name." Our Lord said plainly, "No one comes to the Father but by me." Saving faith in Christ means living in Him, in His Body, in His Church. The writer, therefore, holds that membership in a Church which confesses Christ before men (and women) and follows the Bible as the one sufficient and final rule of faith and practice is an essential completing step to saving faith.

I hold that the Church of Jesus Christ is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally One. Its three dominant symbols are: the Bride of Christ, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of Christ. It has one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, one Book, one goal, and one Judge. Since the churches that compose the One Church are made up of very different races and kinds and conditions of men and women, these embodied churches take many different forms. As within the supreme authority of the Bible many interpretations seem reasonable to Christians facing different conditions, so a vari-

ety of somewhat different doctrines and polities are espoused. This diversity is abundantly allowable within the overarching unity of the Church represented by biblical symbols. Yet Christ is not divided; neither in the mind of God or His people.

If one may use an analogy, there is one granite rock in the world. Granite is granite wherever found. Yet there are many different kinds—pink, white, gray, green, and black; coarse-grained and fine-grained; New England granite, Canadian granite, Zairian granite, Mongolian granite, and so on.

The unity of Christians is not demanded by the biblical revelation. The diversity is that required by local conditions and conditioned by historical background, language spoken, cultural peculiarities, economic situation, and the like. The diversity must always be strictly within biblical limits; but these must neither be defined by the Church of any one nation, country, or part of the world, nor appropriate to it only. The unity of the Church is unity in Christ. He is Head of the Church—the only Head she has. He calls and appoints leaders of each Church, gives them power and authority, and requires that their understanding of the Church, in their circumstances, be determined strictly according to His revelation in the Bible.

The One Church appears in the twentieth century as an amazing company of churches—literally hundreds or, counting linguistic segments, thousands of separate ones. I state here not what ought to be, but what is. This company is rich beyond description, and all its constituent parts are true Church, so long as they live filled with the Holy Spirit and ruled by the written Word and the Word of God who is the risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ.

Both the ecumenical movement and the evangelical movement stress the validity of churches other than the speaker's own. Provided other churches are following the Bible as the rule of faith and practice, and Jesus Christ as God and Savior, they are all valid Church, though perhaps not as correct a Church as each speaker believes his (or her) own to be! Thus the twentieth century (whatever the ecclesiology of the speaker) displays a marvelous unity in the Church, together with rich and fruitful discussion, debate, and controversy as to church union, doctrinal purity, the historic episcopate, freedom of conscience, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the nature of God and man, and the evangelization of the world.

Great India is a company of substantial nations each speaking a different language and some having distinct scripts of their own. The Church in Great India is therefore necessarily a very complex form of the Body of Christ. For example, Christians

who speak Khasi and read the Roman Khasi script are quite helpless to read the Hindi Bible in the Devanagari script, even though Hindi is the national language. Christians who read the Hindi Bible fluently cannot read a word in the Malayalam Bible. The tribal cultures of North East India are leagues removed from the Depressed Classes cultures of the Churches of Andhra Pradesh. One can speak of "the Church in India," but it is much more exact and realistic to speak of "the churches of India." The fact of the matter is that the embodied Church on every continent is not one; it is many. Its unity consists entirely in an internal loyalty and obedience to Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Bible.

(Taken from Donald McGavran. *Ethnic Realities and the Church: Lessons from India*. South Pasadena, CA: WCL, 1979, 245-249).

2. Donald McGavran, "*The Doctrine of the Church as Christ's Body, the Household of God*"

God by His Word and Spirit creates the one holy universal and apostolic church, calling sinners of the whole human race into the fellowship of Christ's body. By the same Word and Spirit, He guides and preserves for eternity that new redeemed humanity, the church of Jesus Christ, which (no matter what their tribe, caste, clan, class, culture, or economic condition) is spiritually one with the people of God in all ages and constitutes the church of Christ on earth.

This church exists in discrete congregations and clusters of congregations called conferences, synods, dioceses, denominations, or churches. It is God's clear command that all *ethne* (peoples) are to be disciple—baptized, added to the church, and taught to observe all things commanded by the Lord. The missionary movement consists of all those who are engaged in multiplying these churches among every segment of the world's population. In some segments the work is seed sowing. In others it is harvesting, but all goes forward toward the one glorious end that before our Lord returns there be a congregation of the redeemed in every community everywhere.

Evangelicals before 1920s universally held that membership in Christ's church was the normal fulfillment of conversion. Converts confessed Christ and were incorporated into Christian congregations. After 1920, as evangelicals felt the need to stress the great issues which separated them from liberals, they emphasized instead some of the other main doctrines we have been discussing. Many of them were evangelizing on new ground and were seeing few new converts. Their task seemed

to be proclaiming the gospel rather than bringing sheaves into the Master's barn. The Church Growth Movement, which has spread greatly among evangelicals, has largely reversed that temporary stand. Any truly evangelical theology of mission must set forth a high doctrine of the church, Christ's body. For by its presence, witness, and growth, the church is a central component of God's redemptive plan.

(Taken from Arthur F. Glasser and Donald McGavran. *Contemporary Theologies of Mission*. G.R.: Baker, 1983, 104).

4. Chaney cites Roland Allen. *Missionary Principles*. G.R.: Eerdmans, 1964, 67-100.

5. Bosch is quoting here from Nissiotis 1968:195-197; Bria 1975: 245, 1980:8; 1986:12; Schmemmann 1961: 251; and also cites Stamoolis 1986: 103-127.

6. Here McGavran is drawing from the ancient Cyprianic formula: "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" – outside the church there is no salvation.

7. See also J. Verkuyl: 1978, 188-192.

8. This paragraph is adapted from C. Van Engen: 1991, 61.

9. For short summaries of the questions as to whether the Reformers were mission-minded, see David Bosch: 1991, 243-252;

10. It may be helpful at this point for us to be reminded of McGavran's definition of mission, echoed later by C. Peter Wagner, as follows:

*Donald McGavran's Definition of Mission*

Up to this point, mission has been widely defined as "God's total program for man (sic)," and we have considered the alternatives arising from that definition. Mission may now be defined much more meaningfully. Since God as revealed in the Bible has assigned the highest priority to bringing men (and women) into living relationship to Jesus Christ, we may define mission narrowly as an enterprise devoted to proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and to persuading men (and women) to become His disciples and responsible member of His Church.

—Donald McGavran. *Understanding Church Growth*. G.R.: Eerdmans, 1970, p.35.

*"God Wills His Church to Grow"*

The central purpose of mission (in Donald McGavran's *Bridges of God*) was to be seen as God's will that lost men and women be found, reconciled to himself, and brought into responsible membership in Christian churches.

—C. Peter Wagner, "Donald McGavran: A Tribute to the Founder," in: C. Peter Wagner, edit. *Church Growth: State of the Art*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 1989.

11. Clapp quotes here from Bosch: 1991, 282.

12. This and the preceding paragraph are taken from C. Van Engen: 1997, 29-30.

13. This book was the fruit of Wagner's Ph.D. work at USC in sociology of religion, with emphasis on issues of culture and ethnicity.

14. This was the way the World Council of Churches viewed "ecumenicity" when it was organized in Amsterdam in 1948.

15. See footnote 4.

16. For a fuller treatment of the ecclesiological issues arising from the dominance of the Three-Self Formula and their implications for Church Growth ecclesiology, see C. Van Engen: 1995, 267-279.

17. See Darrell Guder, edit.: 1998.

18. McGavran is borrowing and affirming the phrase used by Roland Allen in Allen's book by= / \* that title.

19. Cf. Eberhard Bethge, "Foreword," in: D. Bonhoeffer, *The Communion of Saints*. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1963.

20. Warneck's contribution was significant, though we must always remember that he was and is an unreliable guide, due to his dependence on the "folk-church" model of culture-Protestantism that later contributed to the silence of the churches in Germany with regard to the ideological and institutionalized racism that eventually bore fruit in the Third Reich.

21. Cf. R. Bassham, *Mission Theology* pp. 23ff.

22. See Steven G Mackie. *Can Churches Be Compared?* Geneva: WCC, 1970; and Steven Mackie, "Seven Clues for Rethinking Mission", IRM, (LX, 1971) pp. 324-326.

23. An urgent call for new ecclesiological and missiological thinking about the church has come from a number of Roman Catholic and Protestant Latin Americans like Leonardo Boff, Juan Luis Segundo, René Padilla and Orlando Costas.

24. D. Barrett, "Five Statistical Eras of Global Mission," p. 31.

25. See, for example, Hendrik Kraemer, *From Missionfield to Independent Church*, The Hague: Boekencentrum, 1938).

26. Cf., e.g., A. P Flannery, edit. *Documents of Vatican II*. G.R.: Eerdmans, 1975.

27. This section is adapted from C. Van Engen: 1991, 37-40.

28. With the exception of the first paragraph, this material is taken from Orlando Costas. *The Church and its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World*. (Chicago: Tyndale, 1974) 90-91; this was later published in Spanish in Orlando Costas. *El Protestantismo en America Latina Hoy: Ensayos del Camino* (1972-1974) (San Jose, Costa Rica: Indef, 1975) 68-70. See also Orlando Costas. *The Integrity of Mission: The Inner Life and*

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*Outreach of the Church* (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1979) 37-60.

29. Lesslie Newbigin. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. G.R., Eerdmans, 1989, 222-223.

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