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Introduction

Gary L. McIntosh, Editor

Christian leaders throughout history modeled many church growth principles, as seen in the first article of this issue of the Journal of the American Society for Church Growth. "George Fox: A Man of Fiery Passion on a Mission for Jesus" by Tom Crawford, demonstrates Fox's commitments to prayer, scripture, lay ministry, and practical ministry. He employed several church growth insights well before church growth became a field of study.

Charles Arn explores the difference between evangelism and disciple-making. He addressed key questions, such as "What is success?" "What is the method?" and "Who is involved?" Evangelizing senior adults is a key component of many churches discipleship plans. "Senior Adult Evangelism" by David Moore, applies church growth thinking to this topic to assist leaders in being more intentional in their evangelistic practices.

Shuma Iwai writes about the impact of syncretism on the Christian church in Japan. Iwai discusses the biblical foundations, historical background, and Shintoistic Christianity on church growth in Japan.

"The Protean Church" offers new way of thinking about church growth. Allan Karr suggests that, "Protean is descriptive of a church model which tenuously combines a foundational grounding of the tenets of faith to scripture while at the same time being fluid, diverse, and versatile, possessing the ability to 'shape-shift' according to the needs of the community and culture."

Several critical book reviews conclude this issue. It is our plan to offer at least four book reviews in every issue of future journals.

—Editor

George Fox:
A Man of Fiery Passion on a Mission for Jesus

Tom Crawford

Impassioned by his personal experience of the "light of Christ" Fox became a dynamic, fanatically sincere speaker. He would speak the "truth" anywhere that God provided an opportunity for him to "convince" people that it was possible for them to "experience" the indwelling light of Christ to change their lives. He was not particular about where he spoke, for he would preach in barns, houses, fields, and in churches after the pries was finished. His ministry began in the northern part of England where he would preach, pray, and protest without reservation. Because he often denounced creeds, forms, rites, external sacraments, and man-made ministry, he was not popular and was often persecuted and imprisoned for his beliefs. Nevertheless Fox and his movement "the Society of Friends" (Quakers) would grow and flourish in England and beyond. Being both a Spirit anointed preacher and a prolific writer by the time of his death, his followers would number approximately 50,000 and the impact of his teaching and call to repentance would be felt as far away as the United States as well as several other countries. Beginning with his childhood this article will attempt to examine how Fox came to have the kind of impact that would infuriate the orthodox ruling class, the religious leaders of his day, and at the same time appeal to the common masses.

Born the summer of 1624 in central England to Christian parents of modest income and position, George Fox had a passion from a young age to help men find a genuine religious experience. This began early in his life when at the age of eleven he had a religious crisis. He wrote in his journal concerning this:

I knew pureness and righteousness, for while I was a

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child I was taught how to walk to be kept pure. The Lord taught me to be faithful in all things, and to act faithfully two ways, viz., inwardly to God, and outwardly to man ... and that my words should be few and savory, seasoned with grace, and that I might not eat and drink to make myself wanton, but for health . . .[1]

Fox continued to develop spiritually while apprenticing as a shoemaker, also keeping sheep and dealing in wool. This was a particularly good occupation for him as it allowed him much times of solitude to contemplate what the Spirit was saying to him about his condition and the state of the world in which he lived.

While developing into a young man this early sense of seriousness and God being with him would radically impact the way he viewed himself and the culture around him. At the age of nineteen another religious crisis developed in his life as he observed the apparent contradiction between what religious people said on the one hand, and how they lived on the other. Walter Williams describes his perplexed state as being:

. . . distressed and confused by the seeming inconsistency of professing Christians. The Puritan neighbors whom he knew, professed Christianity, but seemed to live as worldlings. Did Christian faith result in no transformation of life? He knew that the Holy Scriptures called upon the penitent sinner to break with sin, and live a righteous and holy life; yet the preachers were ever 'pleading for sin and imperfection' so long as men live in the world.[2]

Holding the conviction that religion ought to make bad people good he was further dismayed by a Puritan cousin who asked him to go to an inn to have a jug of beer with him and his friend. When they started to drink "healths" (excessively) George protested, but to no avail.

They said the first to quit drinking would pay the bill and Fox promptly stood, put some money down and left the inn. This experience prompted him to leave not only the inn, but his job and his home "in search of a faith which would really show itself in the lives of those who professed it."[3] He did this in the belief that God had commanded him to do so.

For the next three or four years Fox traveled the country side trying to resolve the conflict he felt in his soul between what he saw as a sinning religion and a religion that should be holy or pure. In his mind, reform of the church alone had not been suffi-

cient because people were still living a dualistic lifestyle. In his travels he would experience loneliness, the temptation to despair and other temptations. He sought ought professors, priests, magistrates, Christians, and ordinary people to get counsel in order to resolve the inner spiritual conflict he was experiencing. The counsel he received was greatly varied and did not seem to have a great deal to do with resolving his inner spiritual turmoil. Relatives told him he should get married, others said he should become a soldier, and a priest told him to use tobacco and sing psalms for relief. Often those Fox confided in would betray his confidences. Another priest was friendly with Fox and seemed to enjoy his conversations with him until George stepped on one of his flowers which set him into a rage. This last experience was just another compounding of his inner turmoil. He was searching far and wide for spiritual truth and unable to find it.

He felt as though he was in the school of affliction with his questions still unanswered. However, God was using this time to mold him and prepare him for the ministry that was to follow. During this time Walter Williams says that Fox developed his conviction that:

> . . . it is not the outward label of church membership or profession, but the inner belief of the heart, that makes one a Christian: that it is the passing from a state of spiritual death to one of spiritual life which enrolls one's name in the Lamb's Book of Life: not man's performance of rites and ceremonies, but a God-wrought miracle in his soul.[4]

Through all of his searching he was coming to the realization that there would be no help found in the world or in the council of men. His heart was divided and he could not find the help he needed to resolve this conflict. Fox states it like this:

> . . . I found that there were two thirsts in me, the one after the creatures, to have gotten help and strength there, and the other after the Lord the creator and his Son Jesus Christ. And I saw all the world could do me no good. If I had had a king's diet, palace, and attendance, all would have been as nothing, for nothing gave me comfort but the Lord by his power.[5]

Fox was moving ever closer to experiencing the risen Christ who would bring life to him in a personal way. In the Gospel of John we are told that "he that hath the son hath life." This experience of a life set free for powerful abundant living is about to become a reality for one whom diligently sought after the truth

from childhood. After experiencing loneliness, ridicule, frustra-
tion, many miles traveled, shelter less nights and after much
prayer and Bible reading Fox describes discovering the joy of a
life set free in Christ like this:

> I saw that there was none among them all that could
> speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in the m
> and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing out-
> wardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, Oh
> then, I heard a voice which said, `There is one, even
> Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and when I
> heard it my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord let me
> see why there was none upon the earth that could speak
> to my condition, namely, that I might give him all the
> glory; for all are concluded under sin, and shut up in
> unbelief as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have the
> pre-eminence, who enlightens, and gives grace, and
> faith, and power. Thus, when God doth work who shall
> let it? And this I knew experientially . . . My desires after
> the Lord grew stronger, and zeal in the pure knowledge
> of God and of Christ alone, without the help of any man,
> book, or writing.[6]

Thus, after a long and arduous journey George Fox discov-
ered a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This would prove
to be the central or core experience from which the Quaker mes-
sage would spring. At the age of twenty-two Fox is now ready to
begin proclaiming his message of a personal, transforming, and
experiential faith in Jesus Christ with England and the world.
His journey for truth had been difficult and would remain diffi-
cult because in "1646 the doctrine of the great Puritan
Churches—the Presbyterians, Independents, and Particular Bap-
tists—left little room for a first-hand experiential faith of this
kind.[7] In spite of the religious insincerity around him, and driven
by passion to experience the reality of truth in a personal way he
found what he was looking for and the religious insincerity of
his day would be unable to silence his message. Someone has
said that a man with an experience is never at the mercy of a
man with an argument and I believe this definitely proved to be
true for Fox.

To this point in his life Fox had experienced personal salva-
tion and a revival of his own soul. By spending much time seek-
ing God's truth, reading the Bible, and praying, he came to a
knowledge of who Christ is and experienced in a personal way
the Holy Spirit setting him free from his old nature to be able to
live in obedience to Christ. One might even describe this as a

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power encounter, removing the curse of the past and bringing him in to a deeper life in Christ. Many of the expressions of revival were evident in his life.

His personal revival led to Holy Spirit empowered preaching which brought conviction and repentance among his hearers. One afternoon Fox waited for a church meeting to break up and as the people were leaving he began to declare his message. The crowd grew to one thousand and he preached in power holding their attention for three hours. Braithwaite reports it like this:

> . . . the Lord's power surprised him. It was an intensely expectant and receptive company... after some time he stood up, with his rapt face and piercing gaze . . . he was there to tell them that Christ Himself was now come . . . all were to hearken to Him.[8]

Many were convinced (repented) that they could experience a changed life by confessing their sin and allowing Christ to empower them to live in obedience to his word.

The separation between religion and life was over. Fox called his followers to walk in purity free from sin by the power of the Holy Spirit. Fox believed that if he could be kept pure so could others. God would do nothing special for him that he would not do for anyone who sincerely sought the Lord and trusted him. He believed that God would enable anyone to live in purity but to do so would require "persistent watchfulness, in utter dependence on the power of God." On this subject he wrote Oliver Cromwell's daughter, Lady Claypole, encouraging her to seek God's help to be pure. He expressed it like this:

> Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts and then thou wilt feel the principle of God to turn thy mind to the Lord God, whereby thou wilt receive his strength and power from whence life comes to allay all tempests, blusterings and storms . . . .What the light doth make manifest and discover, temptations, confusions, distractions, distempers; do not look at the temptations, confusions, corruptions, but at the light which discovers them, that makes them manifest; and with the same light you will feel over them, to receive power to stand against them . . . For looking down at sin, and corruption, and distraction, you are swallowed up in it; but looking at the light which discovers them, you will see over them. That will give victory; and you will find grace and strength: and there is the first step of peace.[9]

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Fox believed that the Lord was able to deliver from everything including willful sin. If God is all powerful, he certainly has power over all sin. He taught his followers how to find deliverance from the sin principle and live a deeper life of purity in Christ. It worked for many because the "Quakers" became known for their honesty and simple, pure lifestyle. They were highly respected for this even among people who often did not hold to their same convictions.

The response to this message of experiential faith was phenomenal. Little groups of "the children of Light" were springing up rapidly in Northern England. From these followers Fox trained leaders, six of whom he worked with closely. Additionally sixty more fiery lay preachers were raised up to evangelize the land. This group became known as the "Valiant Sixty." Vipont says the "Valiant Sixty" entered into a missionary campaign. She describes is like this:

> This widespread missionary campaign was pursued with such devotion and energy that in some places it proved almost irresistible. In Bristol especially, John Audland and John Camm found many Seekers who welcomed the Quaker message as an answer to their prayers, and wonderful meetings were held, calling forth the very best in those who had brought it. "As the work is great," wrote John Audland, "the power is greatest in us that ever we knew."[10]

Under the power of Fox's preaching and leadership, the "Valiant Sixty" became carriers of revival literally taking the essence of revival with them every place they went. This movement had the urgency of the Holy Spirit in it, compelling those who had come to enjoy the rest and victory to carry the good news to other towns and cities.

The "Valiant Sixty" shared the ministry in eastern, southern, and western England. Fifty-four of them were men; twelve were women. These itinerant "Publishers of Truth" were lay people, forty of whom were connected with farming in some way. Several were involved in trades, and some were professional people. Fox, following biblical precedent, sent them forth two by two. They preached in homes, market places, out in the open air, in jails, and sometimes in churches. Strategically, they sought to reach population centers such as London. According to Walter Williams,

> . . . these God-sent messengers carried the gospel message over most of England to rich, and poor, high and low. By 1660—less than six years after the crusade be-

gan—there would be 30,000 to 40,000 Friends in England.

George Fox, then only thirty-six years of age, would be recognized as the most powerful spiritual leader in England. At the time of his death (1691), Friends would constitute the largest Non-conformist group in England.[11]

Some estimate the number of this Non-conformist Friends group to be as many as 60,000, perhaps even more. It seems reasonable to believe that revival was taking place in a country that had been experiencing civil, political, and religious unrest. God was pouring out His Spirit on His people and society was being changed, morally, ethically, politically, and spiritually.

Other outstanding characteristics of George Fox which would prove to be expressions of revival include his extraordinary gift to preach the Scriptures in a way that opened them to clear understanding. His preaching was Christ-centered, stood against living a sinful life as a professing Christian, and relevant to the society of his time. He preached with much effort and power. I believe his preaching was powerful in part because of his Bible knowledge. He was recognized far and wide for his knowledge of God's word. Someone said that if all the Bibles were lost or destroyed Fox would be able to rewrite the Bible from memory.

In addition to his powerful preaching, he excelled in prayer. One would be hard pressed to know which he was better at, praying or preaching. William Penn gives us some insight as to how one affected the other. Penn says "the most awful, living, reverent frame I ever felt or beheld, I must say was his prayer. And truly it was a testimony that he knew and lived nearer to the Lord than other men; for they that know him most will see most reason to approach him with reverence and fear." The power of his preaching flowed from the intenseness of his prayer life. Fox was an incessant laborer among his followers both in prayer and preaching.

Another outstanding characteristic of his life which contributes to revival is the fact that he suffered much for his convictions, and was at times persecuted mercilessly, and yet he refused to repay evil for evil, and he would suffer in humility until the truth was revealed and God delivered him. At one time he even refused the offer of a pardon from Oliver Cromwell, instead waiting for the truth to be revealed, because he did not want even a hint of guilt to be connected with his name or ministry. This ability to live above reproach even in the face of persecution attracted those who were seeking the genuine article. In

Fox, people found someone whose walk matched his talk. His ability to turn his cheek and treat those who attacked him with respect was incredible. It is impressive that Fox moved constantly among rude, vengeful people who often wanted to persecute him, yet his objective was to overcome these attitudes by going among these people in the power of the Lord and treating them with love in order to change their mind and life (convince them). And he did convince many.

The persecution he suffered came from the government, religious leaders, and the church hierarchy. In some way all were threatened by Fox. Government and political leaders often thought he was against the state and would seek to overthrow the legitimate government. Church leaders and pastors were often infuriated because Fox preached against "steeple house" religion that he saw as a sinning religion that was not consistent with the teaching of Scripture or what God revealed to him through experience. Hence, he was imprisoned no less than eight times during his ministry. Fox describes the outcome of an incident where a priest and congregation deeply resented his message:

> And when I began to speak, they fell upon me and the clerk up with his Bible as I was speaking and hit me in the face that my face gushed out with blood and it run off me in the steeple house . . . and they punched me and thrust me out and beat me sore with books, fists and sticks and threw me over a hedge into a close and there beat me over again. And they beat me into a house punching me through the entry, and there I lost my hat and never had it again, and after dragged me into the street, stoning and beating me along, sorely blooded and bruised. And the priest beheld a great part of this his people's doings.[12]

No wonder many were convinced that the experience Fox preached about was real. To survive this kind of physical abuse and in addition not strike back one would have to have supernatural Holy Spirit power and help.

In addition to everything I have mentioned there were supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit evident in Fox's ministry. When the people prayed, buildings shook, people would quake, and some were healed. There are reports that more than one hundred people received physical healing when Fox prayed for them. One of the meetings where Pentecostal manifestations took place was Malton.

There was, he says, at Malton, at the time called Christ-

mas, nigh two hundred Friends met to wait upon the Lord, and did continue three or four days together, and did scarce part night or day I was with them, and twice the mighty power of the Lord was made manifest; almost all the room was shaken.[13]

This is quite reminiscent of the book of acts with rooms shaking and jail doors flying open. Perhaps Christians today need to spend more time in prayer, praying for inner purity and revival as Fox and his followers did.

1. The desire that Christians might be moved to clearer and deeper understanding of Scripture through their devout study in small conventicles or house meetings.
2. The desire to have laity rediscover the universal priesthood of believers by giving lay persons positions of responsibility in these conventicles.
3. He urged all to see that the nature of Christianity is such that it cannot be contained in doctrinal formulations, but that it is rather a total experience of faith, and an attitude in the whole life. Doctrines are important . . . but much more important is the actual experience and practice of the Christian life.
4. The desire for all controversies to be carried out in a spirit of charity.
5. Spener wished that the training of pastors would go beyond cold logic and orthodox theology, and include a profound immersion in devotional literature and practice as well as some training and experience in the actual work of shepherding the flock.
6. As a result of this newly trained clergy, Spener wished to see the pulpit regain its original purpose of instructing, inspiring, and feeding the believers, rather than being used for learned disquisitions on obscure or irrelevant points of doctrine.[14]

Although Fox applied some of these points with variations, I believe they are a fair representation of how Fox envisioned ministry taking place.

In conclusion I want to summarize the dynamics of revival and growth in the "Society of Friends" as I see them. This was a lay movement. Fox spoke much about the priesthood of all believers. All believers have a message for the world, as well as the "Valiant Sixty" whom Fox sent out two by two. These itinerant preachers evangelized just as every lay person should. Next, two week, monthly, six week and quarterly meetings were an early application of the cell group idea for inner growth and vitality.

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Many Seekers who were open to the Quakers came into Fox's movement through these groups. Simplicity is the third dynamic of revival. The religious experience Fox taught was simple. There were no barriers such as priests, liturgy, or buildings between God and man, thus one could experience the immediacy of God's presence in his religion. This was very appealing to the masses in seventeenth century England. Fourth, the ethical and moral fervor of the movement impacted, influenced, and often changed the values of society. As I mentioned earlier persecution caused growth and in this case would be a dynamic of revival. Moving on, Fox emphasized a restoration of apostolic Christianity that moved away from the letter of the law and tradition and empowered the laity. Seventh, there was an emphasis on universal redemption as opposed to the limiting Puritan and Calvinistic doctrine of election. The final factor of revival and growth as I see it is the fact that George Fox was a person of great religious fervor, charisma, and fidelity; powerful both in prayer and preaching.

William Penn said that "as to man, he was an original, being no man's copy."[15] When writing Fox's epitaph Penn wrote "Many sons have done virtuously in this day; but, dear George, thou excellest them all."[16] George Fox was a man of fiery passion who was on a mission for Jesus and he made a difference in his time and beyond.

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11. Williams, *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism*, 51.
12. Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, 99.
13. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 76.
14. Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought, vol. 3* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1975), 275-276.
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16. Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, xxxvii.

Evangelism or Disciple-making?

Dr. Charles Arn

There is a growing body of evidence in church growth research, as well as in the practical experience of pastors and church leaders, to make the following somewhat startling observation: *Many current evangelism methods are, at best, irrelevant to church growth…and, at worse, are inhibiting the effective outreach of well-meaning Christians and churches.*

When I first considered this paradox I found it both curious, and somewhat discouraging. Certainly most churches can point to some results from their evangelistic endeavors. But if we are honest with ourselves, the "return on investment" of our people, time, and resources spent in evangelism does not show a healthy stewardship of the "talents" (Mt. 25:14-28) the Master has left in our care. In fact, the methods used in many evangelistic activities actually seems to be *confining* the Good News of the Gospel within the walls of the church!

But church growth research does not study traditions simply to create disorder in the status quo. Rather, it searches for best practices that can help develop best practices that will maximize results in response to Christ's command to "…go and make disciples" (Mt. 28:20).

Toward this end, I would like to highlight some basic differences between traditional "evangelism," as commonly practiced today, and "disciple-making," a term that I believe should more accurately describe our efforts in response to the Great Commission. A more complete discussion of both the research and a "church growth model of evangelism" may be found in the book *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples*.[1]

What is "Success"?

This question highlights one of the basic differences between

"evangelism" and "disciple-making:"

Evangelism. Success is achieved when a verbal response is given by a non-Christian, which indicates his/her endorsement of a set of convictions reflective of their new Christian faith.

Disciple-making. Success is achieved when a change in behavior is observed in a person, which indicates his/her personal integration of a set of convictions reflective of their new Christian faith.

It's a subtle, but fundamental, distinction. And because the *goals* are different, the *process* used to achieve the goals often differ.

The church growth goal, in response to the Great Commission, is "to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to persuade people to become His disciples and responsible members of His Church".[2] A responsible church member, of course, can only be identified through observation.

The evangelism goal, by contrast, generally has a *decision-oriented* objective, and focuses on leading a person to the expression of verbal repentance and commitment to Christ. Whereas a "decision" focuses on that specific event, a "disciple" focuses on an enduring life-style. Don't assume that decision-making and disciple-making are synonymous. Nearly every pastor can testify that not all "decisions" result in "disciples" and responsible church members.

Because evangelism defines success on the basis of a decision, its activities are typically designed to hasten such an event. The good news is that many evangelism methods are successful in doing just that. The bad news is that, in so doing, they may actually be diminishing the successful assimilation of people into active church involvement and discipleship. How so?

What is the Method?

Evangelism. The method focuses on bringing a person to an intellectual endorsement of Christian beliefs, observed by a verbal acknowledgement of these new beliefs. Since this endorsement of Christian values is validated through a verbal acknowledgement, the process of effective evangelism is a *verbal presentation* of such Christian convictions.

Disciple-making. The method focuses on bringing a person to a behavioral change that reflects the integration of Christian values into their life, as observed by their participation in the life and fellowship of a local church. Since endorsement of Christian values is validated through behavioral observation, the process of effective disciple-making is *experiential observation* of such Christian behavior by the non-Christian.

Of course, the two need not be mutually exclusive. But distinguishing the objectives helps us more clearly consider the best practices for achieving them. The key question is whether a non-Christian's lifelong values, attitudes, and life-style are more likely to be changed through the verbal presentation of information, or the experiential observation of behavior.

"Actions speak louder than words" is particularly true when it comes to bringing others to new faith and Christian discipleship. If the goal is a changed life, and not just repeated words, the method employed will make a difference in the result observed. The Apostle John makes a similar observation about sharing God's love with others: "Love is not a matter of words or talk, it must be genuine and show itself in action" (1 Jn. 3:18).

Effective disciple-making strategies should provide a number of opportunities for non-Christians to be with and to observe other Christians, so that non-Christians come into regular contact with a variety of believers in a variety of situations. Research, in fact, bears out the importance of multiple exposures to the Christian message and people. A study compared two groups of new believers, one made up of new converts who had become active church members in the year following their conversion; a second group who had dropped out of, or never gotten involved in, church following their conversion. The variable studied was the difference in the number of Christian exposures these people had had—*prior* to their conversion. The difference was significant. Active members had an average of six Christian exposures to the Gospel in the year prior to their conversion. Dropouts, by contrast, had seen or heard the Christian message only twice before their decision. The researcher's conclusion: "when non-Christians have multiple opportunities to see, hear, and experience the Christian message, they are more likely to understand the implications of their commitment, and thus have fewer surprises following their commitment."[3] (And, are therefore more likely to stick with their commitment.) Traditional evangelism strategies, by contrast, often assert that "now is the moment," and encourage a response regardless of the history or context.

Who is Involved?

Evangelism. The assumption is that any individual can adequately represent the person of Christ and sufficiently model the Christian faith so as to cause a non-Christian to grasp the implications and meaning of being a Christian disciple.

Disciple-making. The assumption is that any individual Christian cannot adequately represent of the person of Christ, and

that only through exposure to the Body of Christ—the local church—can a non-Christian accurately perceive the implications and meaning of being a Christian disciple.

This distinction does not imply that a single Christian cannot lead another person to a new relationship with Christ. Of course many have. God uses any and all means to bring people to new life.

What these two statements do suggest is that in our response to Christ's Great Commission, we should be aware that the local church—with its complementary assortment of spiritual gifts—more accurately reflects the Body of Christ than any one individual member. Exposure to the local church provides the most accurate picture available of the incarnation of Christ in today's world. And when a person is exposed to the Body of Christ they are more likely to see and experience the incarnation of Christ on earth.

Using spiritual gifts in the church is an important strategy for disciple-making. In Scripture, we read that spiritual gifts are for the building up (i.e., *growth*) of the Body of Christ (I Cor. 4:12). While all Christians are expected to be able to give witness to the hope that is within them (I Peter 3:15), this does not mean that every Christian is a gifted evangelist. According to the New Testament, there are some in the church—with the spiritual gift of evangelist (Eph. 4:11)—who are better able to lead people to new Christian faith.[4]

But could a person have a role in making disciples if he/she does not have the gift of evangelist, but has, say, the gift of hospitality? Of course! This person's most effective witness may simply be in opening his/her home to non-Christian friends, church visitors, or persons in need. As a result, using one's gift in disciple-making does not require that every Christian possess the characteristics required in traditional evangelism: extrovertive personality, verbal fluency, resolute tenacity, good memory, and quick answers to complex questions. Disciple-making simply means using your unique spiritual gift, in concert with others' gifts, in the overall process of bringing people into the family of God.

Over 30 years ago Win Arn and Donald McGavran made an important observation in their groundbreaking book *How to Grow a Church*:

> You would misuse Christ's gifts if you used them solely for the service of existing Christians. That is not why these gifts are given. As we see God's overwhelming concern for the salvation of humanity, we must assume that His gifts are given, at least in large part, that the lost

may come to know Him, whom to know is life eternal.[5]

Frankly, it is a guilt-producing inaccuracy to suggest that every Christian should be an evangelist. In the New Testament there are only three places where the word "evangelist" is used (and the word "evangelism" is never used). In each case it refers to exercising the particular spiritual gift and/or performing a special activity expected of only certain persons. Acts 21:8 describes Philip—the evangelist. In II Timothy 4:5 Paul tells Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist." And in Ephesians 4:11 the spiritual gift of evangelist is introduced. Evangelists were those select people responsible to "tell the Good News of victory in battle" (the Greek meaning of evangelist). At the same time, there are over a hundred references in the New Testament where followers of Christ are called upon to spread the Good News of the Christian faith. The mistaken assumption of many evangelism approaches is that "making disciples" means telling the Good News—which is actually the work of the gifted evangelist. The most effective strategy for disciple-making is to build on the unique gifts of each member of the body, and develop a strategy for using those gifts—in concert—to share the love of God with others. Remember, the more Christians (i.e., the more parts of the Body) a potential disciple knows, the more compete his/her understanding of God's love.

What is the Approach?

The approach which Christians take in presenting the Gospel of Christ to a non-believer has a great deal to do with their eventual results.

Evangelism. There are two possible approaches that traditional evangelism takes in the persuasion process. The first is a "content" approach. This approach sees evangelism as presentation of facts that the hearer needs to know in order to make a reasonable decision. The content of the Christian message can be communicated verbally, or in print, or electronically, or through audio-visual medium. In this view, when the content of the Christian message has been adequately presented, it is reasonable to ask for a response (i.e., a decision for Christ). Any Christian can succeed in evangelism if he/she learns how to present the content of the Gospel correctly. The relationship between the Christian and non-Christian (if there is one) is characteristic of the relationship between a teacher-to-student, with the objective being to communicate correct information.

A second approach sometimes employed in evangelism methodology is the "manipulative" approach. This approach sees evangelism as a process of using the right technique to so-

licit a decision. The approach could be an emotional appeal, or leading a person through a set of previously rehearsed questions and answers. Evangelism training, in this approach, means teaching the correct technique. With the manipulative approach, any Christian can succeed in evangelism if he/she learns the right persuasive approach. The relationship between the Christian and the non-Christian in this approach is characteristic of a salesman-to-customer, the objective being to get a positive decision.

Disciple-making. This approach to the persuasion process is "relational." It sees conversion as the result of a genuine relationship of caring, listening, sharing, and trusting between the Christian and non-Christian. This approach—which, by the way, takes considerably more time than the other approaches—assumes that God's love is most accurately experienced through the love of God's people. The assumption behind this approach is that since every non-Christian is different, one pre-planned and pre-canned approach will not work. In the relational approach, any Christian can succeed if he/she learns how to love. The relationship between the Christian and the non-Christian, in this approach, is characteristic of a friend-to-friend, the goal being to allow God's irresistible love to be experienced.

A seminal research study considered whether there was a relationship between how a Christian viewed the evangelistic process and the subsequent result of his/her evangelistic endeavors.[6] The study isolated three groups of subjects (240 people in each group) who received an evangelistic presentation: 1) one group were those who, in response to an evangelistic presentation, made a Christian commitment and became subsequently involved in a local church; 2) a second were those who made a commitment, but had no ensuing church involvement; 3) those who did not positively respond at all to the evangelistic presentation. The results were startling! Seventy percent (169 of the 240) of the now Christians and active church members came to their faith through a Christian who employed a relational approach ("friend-to-friend," as the researcher called it). In contrast, 87% of those persons (209 of 240) who made a verbal commitment but were not active in a church had come to their decision through a person who viewed evangelism as manipulative("salesman-to-customer"). And, of those who did not convert, 75% (180 of 240) had been presented with the Gospel by someone who saw evangelism as sharing content, facts, and theology ("teacher-to-student"). This study seems to indicate that a manipulative approach to evangelism (salesman-to-customer) actually results in the greatest percentage of persons making a verbal

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decision. However, the dropout rate of such an approach is 8 of every 10! As mentioned earlier, the goal of evangelism can affect the method. If the goal is to get a decision, a manipulative method apparently works best. But this approach seems to actually be counter-productive…if the goal is making disciples.

What about Assimilation?

In a few evangelistic approaches today the matter of a person's eventual involvement in a local church is not considered critical, and "the results are left up to God." Such approaches assume that the Great Commission will be fulfilled when everyone in the world has been exposed to the content of the Gospel. But, in general, most evangelizers express a genuine desire that their converts find a place of involvement in a local congregation. Assuming this is the desire, what are the differing assumptions about how new believers are assimilated into a church?

Evangelism. The assumption is that a *common faith* between the new believer and the church member is the basis upon which active church membership can be built.

Disciple-making. The assumption is that *common relationships* between the new believer and other church members is the basis upon which active membership can be built.

Numerous studies in the field of church growth indicate that the primary reason people remain involved in their church is the friendships and relationships they establish with other members. And, when people do drop out, the reason is usually a *relational* issue, not a theological one. One study found that when dropouts were asked why they left their church, 81% responded that they did not feel a "sense of belonging" in that church. And when asked what would be most important in their search for a new church home, 75% said: "the friendliness of the people."[7] Another study found that persons who became active church members made an average of seven new friends in the church, while dropouts made less than two.[8]

Actually, the assimilation of a newcomer into a local church should begin long *before* their conversion. Friendships that non-Christians develop with members of your church will be a key part in their eventual assimilation into your church. In fact, one of the most fruitful activities your evangelism committee could engage in during the coming year is to help members develop or strengthen friendships with non-Christians! That will have a far greater impact on your church's outreach and growth than training those same people to verbally present the plan of salvation.

But with such an idea you may hear the reaction: "If we make friends with non-Christians and invite them to church ac-

tivities it will adversely affect our Christian community. Consider the strategy of one of the most productive disciple-makers in recent history:

> John Wesley had three ultimate objectives for people: 1) That they experience the grace of God and the gift of faith, and become conscious followers of Jesus Christ. 2) That they become part of a class or group of believers. 3) That, upon achievement of 1 and 2, the experience growth toward Christian perfection. It is crucial to point out that the first two objectives could be achieved in a person's life history in either order, and the more usual sequence was 2, and then 1.

That is, most of the people who became Methodist converts first joined a Bible study group and sometime later became conscious Christians! This helps to explain why Wesley, in his extensive open-air field preaching, *never* invited people to accept Jesus Christ and become Christians on the spot! This statement must surely shock those of us whose assumptions about public evangelism have been carved out in the Billy Graham era, as it would shock the evangelical Christians of any generation since Charles Finney first began inviting responders to the "mourner's bench."[9]

Lyle Schaller makes a similar observation:

> The ones most likely to become active members are those who become part of a group where membership in that face-to-face small group is meaningful *before* formally uniting with that congregation. They are assimilated before they join.[10]

Flavil Yeakley, a church growth researcher who closely studied the differences between church drop-outs and active members, concluded his doctoral dissertation by observing:

> When people have no meaningful contact with church members in the process of their conversion, they are likely to feel no meaningful identification with that church after their conversion, and are therefore likely to drop out.[11]

The fact is that it would do many churches a world of good to have an abundance of pagans in their midst! Certainly Christ did not shrink from the prospect of sitting, eating, and talking with sinners. Indeed, he was known as a friend of sinners (Luke 7:34).

Yet some churches that pride themselves in their evangelistic

fervor would have little tolerance for cigarette butts on the church property, dirty blue jeans in the sanctuary, or cuss words in the classes. I listened to the story of one pastor recently who had brought a teenage Christian rock group to the church for a Saturday night event. Over 700 young people from the community had attended and heard the Gospel, and over three dozen indicated a desire to commit their lives to Christ. But the next morning, because the custodian had been out of town, members discovered empty beer bottles by the dozens in the parking lot. Imagine, if you can, the reaction of many long-attending church members! But it could have been a cause for celebration…the world had finally come to their church!

People today who respond to Christ's Gospel are those who respond to the love and caring of Christ's people. People do not respond to religious opinions or theological arguments. They are not talked into the Kingdom…they are loved in. Reflecting God's unconditional love is the essence of the Gospel…for God is love. And love is *experienced*, not explained. We've all heard the saying, "people don't care how much we know…until they know how much we care. It reflects a great disciple-making strategy that Christ taught us: Love God first…then others as much as you do yourself (Mt. 22:39). And then, as He said, go and make disciples (Mt. 28:20).

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Senior Adult Evangelism

David E. Moore

Introduction

In the restructuring of age-graded Bible study classes, one of the difficult classes to "promote" is the class with the most elderly age span. The reluctance of adults to attend this class is heard in their response not to be a part of the "next class to glory." The writer of Psalm 90 captured this sentiment when he wrote:

> We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. The length of our days is seventy years-or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrows, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Desperation and fear of death are heard in the voice of these words. Senior adults need to personally know God and His promise of eternal peace. Seniors in this state of hopelessness and fearfulness need to be given the opportunity to hear and then be invited to receive the hope and assurance of personal salvation with the promise of eternal peace and security. The lack of evangelism which targets today's seniors is a growing crisis. The number of unsaved seniors will continue to expand unless today's churches and believers intentionally evangelize these needful individuals that God loves and desires to be a part of His kingdom for eternity.

Imperatives for Evangelizing the Senior

It is not uncommon to find churches focusing their evangelism efforts on children and youth. In 2004, the Barna research organization found that "nearly half (43%) of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so before reaching the age of 13, and two out of three born again Christians (64%) believe Jesus as Savior before their 18th birthday."[1] The rate of belief is reduced dramatically as the age increases. Only one out of eight people 18 to 21 years old come to faith.[2] However, one Veterans Hospital study found that 40% of the patients became believers after the age of 65.[3] The Bergstroms contend that many of the studies used to support youth outreach efforts have neglected to include samples of people over the age of 65.[4] Indeed, as churches focus on the young, the receptivity is evident. But, the receptivity of the senior may be even greater as one experiences the loss of significant loved ones, aspects of self, external objects, time, independence, and purpose. The church is no exception to the presence and practice of ageism. Arn and Arn argue there is an absence of effective senior adult ministries that focuses on the life experiences and spiritual needs of people over the age of 55, and even fewer opportunities for seniors to serve others.[5] There are five compelling reasons to evangelize the senior—the command of Christ, the increasing number of unbelieving seniors, ageism in the church, the myth of automatic spiritual involvement as one ages, and the receptivity of the senior. The challenge to the church is addressing this critical need in the spiritual life of the senior adult.

The Command of Christ

The central mission of the church is evangelism. Christ himself said in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost." As he approached his death on the cross, he further explained in John 20:21 that his mission is now the mission of all believers. He said, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you." This mission of evangelism is found in Mathew 28:19-20, known as "The Great Commission" which main focus is to "make disciples." In making disciples, a witness must be shared with non-believers who are then invited to believe. The second aspect of the command to make disciples is the nurturing and spiritual growth of the new convert. At the moment of Jesus' transfiguration and ascension, Luke records in Acts 1:8, the repetition of the Great Commission as Jesus said, "You will be my witnesses…" The process of making disciples involves the tandems of believing and obedience, proclamation and practice,

telling and teaching, and witnessing and working.[6] After spiritual birth comes the life-long journey of spiritual transformation of all believers.

The Demographic Situation

For decades, the "age" of the populace of America has been youthful. In 1900, the sixty-five and older population represented only four percent of the population of the U.S. However, by 2040, it is predicted that this age group will number almost twenty-five percent of the population.[7] This translates into the church as one out of four attendees will be sixty-five or older. In addition, as life expectancy increases in years due to better health practices and medical improvements, these seniors will live longer and continue in years of fruitful and purposeful life. In matters of faith, only about fifty-one percent of present day seniors (Builders—born 1927-1945) and newly retiring adults (Boomers—born 1946-1964) report to be believers in Christ.[8] When describing themselves, even less percentages of constituents of these two age groups confirm personal faith in Christ.[9] In the 2001 and the 2002 Annual Church Profile of Southern Baptist Churches, only 4% of reported baptisms were in the 60 and older adult population.[10] Only preschoolers (0-5 yrs of age) ranked lower. This demographic shift only magnifies as future generations age. McNeal summarizes in *The Present Future* a study by Rainer, which reports the increasingly bleaker outlook of future believers.[11] The percentage of Christians dramatically declines in succeeding generations. These facts compound the need to present Christ as Savior to all seniors. After a lifetime of rejecting the truth of the Gospel or never having it shared, seniors face an eternal destination of separation from God if believers do not present the claims of Christ.

Ageism within the Church

As churches minister to youth and children with the purpose of reaching them with the truth of salvation, it is unintentionally practicing ageism, the discrimination of adults based on age. They are rightly declaring God's power to the next generation but are blind to the mission field of the non-believing senior whose future is waning. All of life is a gift and unexpected death comes at any time. But, seniors have less predictable time to hear and receive the truth of Christ. In analyzing ageism in the church, questions need to be asked: questions such as: "Is the emphasis put on older adult ministries proportionate to the emphasis put on youth?"; "Does the leadership of the church view older adults as liabilities rather than as valuable resources?" and

"Are older adults active in every area and ministry of the church?" The answers to these questions will indicate the presence or absence of ageism.

Another indication of ageism in the church is the comments from seniors themselves. It is common to hear the excuse that "it is time for someone younger to lead, I am now retired." This is self-directed discrimination strictly because of age. Not only has the church indicated a lack of worth for the individual, but as a senior questions their own worth they contribute to their own ageism. The church is one institution where ageism should not exist as the dignity, value and honor of seniors is returned to the proper biblical perspective.

The Myth of Religious Involvement

As with any other stage and passage of life, senior adults need attention as it concerns spiritual growth and development. Bergen asserts that spiritual maturity is not a simple by product of aging.[12] In fact, she references several studies which "refute the myth that seniors become more religious as they grow older."[13] For the most part, one's interests in the earlier years of life are continued in the latter years. Petty comments that most studies indicate the life-time stability model of involvement. The life-time stability model means that seniors do not become more involved, just maintain or continue their existing levels of participation.[14] The only increase noted was non-organizational religious involvement such as viewing religious programming, praying at home and becoming a part of a "homebound" type of ministry. Dr. William Day commented in a telephone interview that the "longer seniors live it is less likely they will make a profession of faith unless intentional ministry is directed toward them."[15] Arnell Motz reports only a small percentage of new members being added to church roles by conversion are 55 years or above—6.8% over the age of 50 and only 1.2% over the age of 60.[16] In their *Age Wave Wake-up Call*, Arn and Arn commented the conversion growth of 67% of 1,000 member churches related to only one or no seniors.[17]

Receptivity of Senior Adults

A paradoxical truth to the small percentage of senior adult conversions is their overwhelming receptivity. With intentional evangelistic efforts towards senior adults, the rates of salvation experiences and baptisms have increased. In fact, with the growing population of senior adults, outreach to older adults represents the greatest potential for church growth. The Bergstroms reference Arn and Arn on this matter of receptivity who wrote in

Catch the Age Wave:

> Donald McGavran, one of the founders of the modern church-growth movement, observed a remarkable phenomenon on the mission field of India over forty years ago. He noted that when Christianity flourished in a particular area or region, it was often because entire villages or groups of people came to faith in a short period of time. During these 'people movements,' as he later called them, entire castes and tribes would become Christians. Dr. McGavran also observed that although some tribes and castes of people were, at certain times, more receptive to the gospel, other groups tended to be resistant. His subsequent recommendation to missionaries who desired to see the Christian harvest in great numbers was to seek out receptive "people groups'—people whom God had prepared—and focus evangelistic strategy in that direction. This principle of 'receptivity' is just as relevant today as ever. And senior adults are a 'people group' particularly receptive to the Good News. There are three reasons: (1) Seniors are experiencing many changes in life; (2) Older adults have an increased desire for meaningful relationships with others; and (3) Senior adults want (and need) to make a meaningful contribution to society.[18]

Independently, Win Arn and L. Vogel both discovered that seniors are more open to the gospel truth due to the high number of life–transition events.[19] With the reports of receptivity, the question arises as to the low percentage of senior conversions. For those who do convert, are there any factors that lead up to or influence this decision? Dr. William Day pursued these questions in his dissertation, *The Relationship of Selected Contextual and Institutional Factors to the Evangelism of Senior Adults in Churches of the Southern Baptist Convention*.[20] Charles Arn in his *White Unto Harvest* developed a seven step strategy to reach seniors as a result of a study he conducted.[21]

Considerations for Senior Adult Evangelism

Dr William Day conducted a study of two types of Southern Baptist churches—evangelistic (193 churches) and senior adult evangelistic (164 churches). An evangelistic church was defined as a church in the top 0.5 percent of churches (37 or more baptisms) for two out of three years with no senior adult baptism.[22] A senior adult evangelistic church baptized four or more senior adults in two out of three years.[23] One key contextual variable

impacting the baptism results was the relative number of senior adults both inside and outside the church. Beyond this, Day discovered twenty-four institutional variables leading to the conversion of seniors sixty years of age and older. In order of importance, they were: evangelism training, targeting senior adults, seniors witnessing to lost friends, pastoral vision for evangelizing senior adults, evangelistic emphasis in church senior adult programs, evangelistic focus in church programs for the elderly, seniors inviting lost friends to church revivals, evangelism priority in senior adult programs, seniors focusing on the future, senior adult Sunday School classes involved in church evangelism ministry, open, warm greeting of guests by seniors, senior Sunday School leaders trained in evangelism, senior adult "greeters", seniors making friends with non-Christian seniors, evangelistic planning by senior adult Sunday School leaders, vision for church growth by seniors, senior adults starting new Sunday School classes, focusing on the Sunday School purpose of evangelism, worship style enjoyed by seniors, senior adult classes welcoming guests, preaching of evangelistic sermons, quick inclusion of seniors in the life of the church, setting of evangelism goals by seniors, and involving seniors in prayer ministries.[24] One of his baseline conclusions from his research was the need for senior adult evangelism to be an intentional strategy of the church.

Charles Arn believes that seniors need to be the targets of intentional evangelism with a defined strategy that brings focus to the effort. First, he believes churches need to clarify the goal of the outreach priority. This goal is "making disciples and responsible church members."[25] The second step of the strategy is to develop a potential disciple list of friends, relatives, and previous contacts which will then be used in the third step of building bridges toward these individuals through meeting needs or special activities.[26] In the fourth step, the focus on evangelism should be concentrated on the potential disciples that are the most receptive.[27] Senior adult leaders and members need to be trained to share their faith as well as how to be effective disciplemakers. Lifestyle evangelism marks the fifth and sixth step of the strategy.[28] Lastly, churches create a place for senior adult newcomers through various small groups.[29] The church is called to reach all ages with the truth of salvation, yet, there is immediacy with seniors. The fields are truly "white unto harvest."

Consideration for Builders and Boomers

The seniors in the church and community comprise adults of two generations—Builders and Boomers. As both of them have

their unique characteristics and trends, the church will do well to formulate ministry with both of these generations. The make-up of this ministry will be different and especially tailored for the spiritual needs of the Builder or the Boomer. The considerations presented in the previous discussion are the framework and intentional focus of the ministry. Builders and Boomers each have different needs and avenues of evangelism and ministry.

Evangelism to Builders

Being the oldest generation, Builders may begin to seriously concern themselves about spiritual matters. With the tendency to be private and not discuss such personal issues publicly, there will be a reluctance to openly reveal spiritual needs and thoughts. However, attending an event with a simple presentation of the gospel will appeal to the Builders as they consider the truth of salvation, death, forgiveness, and eternal existence. Builders will receive the information and be open to private, individual discussions. The presentation of these topics will need to be respectful with the offer of individual appointments given for follow-up.

According to McIntosh, the main avenue for reaching Builders is through care-giving ministries as the church meets real needs.[30] Many Builders do not have extended family or even children with the ability to provide care for their aging parent or relative.

As the family structure has changed, there is a need for care-givers with few available. Needs of Builders can be addressed with such ministries as a help hot line, support groups, traditional activities around the holidays, assistance with social security and income taxes, trips (with 50% non-Christians), various types of interest classes, counseling, a clearinghouse for transportation and medical attention, and respite care.[31]

Evangelism to Boomers

According to McIntosh, as Boomers have transitioned through the normal stages of life, they have now reached the conclusion there is no salvation in secular society.[32] The search for meaning and purpose has risen to be the prevailing need. However, this search for meaning does not necessarily lead the Boomer to organized religion or the institutional church. Rather than a private matter, Boomers are choosing lifestyles closely aligned with religious beliefs. Re-evaluating personal goals and purpose is an over-riding concern for the Boomer. This generation can be reached with such ministries that highlight purpose and vision, use celebrative worship, stress quality, streamline

structure, offer multiple options, use small groups, restructures existing services, communicate visually, expand the role of women, focus on local ministry, and offer short-term mission involvement.[33] For the next 25 years, the Boomers will be entering the fifty plus age bracket. This adds to the already critical need of reaching seniors with the truth of salvation through Jesus Christ. A two-tracked strategy to reach both Builders and Boomers is needed by the local church.

Results of Interviews on Senior Evangelism

As a part of the preparation for this research of the need for senior adult evangelism, an informal survey of twenty-seven churches with senior adult ministers was conducted. The interview consisted of three basic questions: "Does your senior adult ministry include evangelism?"; "If so, is it direct or servant evangelism?" and "How many senior adult baptisms do you have in a year?" Eight churches interviewed are involved in direct evangelism. As senior adult prospects are discovered, teams of seniors are trained in evangelism and sent to visit the prospects with an evangelistic purpose. Prospect discovery occurs from guests to worship services or attendance at senior events. Fourteen churches replied with a servant evangelism focus and methodology. Servant evangelism activities range from nursing home visits to home repair for seniors in the community. Two senior adult ministers admitted there is no evangelism at this time. Three churches reported that all events for seniors are evangelistic. These events are community service, planned meetings and programs at the church and organized outreach and visitation. The churches with this intentional and all-inclusive focus of ministry conduct ten to thirty baptisms per year. The other twenty-four baptized less than five and even none. Dr. Day's conclusion of the need for intentional evangelism of senior adults was evidenced with these interviews.

Application to First Southern Baptist Church

Currently, First Southern Baptist Church of Dover, Delaware, does not have a senior adult ministry beyond three Bible study classes. These classes are structured to provide care ministry to class members, fellowship, and outreach to prospective members. Rather than working together in a common senior adult ministry, they are individually being responsible for their own grouping of adults. In the last three years, First Southern has only baptized 2 senior adults (age 60 +) per year. This has not been the result of an intentional ministry strategy. Recently, two senior adults have responded to an invitation by the minis-

ter of education to meet and discuss the potential of a senior adult ministry. Separately, both individuals commented they are not interested in a "meet, eat, burp" organization but one of intentional ministry to seniors both within and outside the church. First Southern has been unconsciously practicing ageism with its focus on young adults, younger families, children and youth. First Southern will continue this focus but will provide intentional activities and strategies to reach more seniors with the gospel message. Evangelism training continues to be offered each year. Both F.A.I.T.H.[34] and *Share Jesus Without Fear*[35] have been utilized in the past. This year, the *One-Day/One-Hour Witnessing Workshop* from NAMB or the *Story to Tell/Life to Live* material developed by the South Carolina Baptist Convention will be used for the training. Seniors will be specifically invited to the training to prepare them for personal evangelism wherever and with whomever God directs them. Another emphasis for this summer will be the continuation of an adult VBS class. The target group for this class will be senior adults in a daytime setting. An integrated approach that incorporates Bible study, recreation, fellowship, and learning activities will be staffed, planned and implemented. One other strategy currently maintained and accomplished by seniors is a prayer-walking ministry. Several times throughout the year, senior adult housing complexes have been the target of these prayer walks. Underlying these strategies will be the planning and implementation of a senior adult ministry. It will be one to compete with a vibrant, local senior center, but will discover the niche and purpose God has for it to minister to senior adults.

Conclusion

Through this research, it is evident that intentional evangelism to seniors is the key to answer the critical need of senior adult conversion to the truth of salvation through Jesus Christ. Through the research by both Day and Arn, churches are just as guilty of ageism as modern society and seniors themselves. It is beyond time for evangelistic churches to begin an intentional strategy to reach seniors with the gospel. It goes without saying younger generations need the gospel message, but time for the elderly to be invited and respond is shortening each moment. The low baptism and salvation statistics represented by the seniors is an indictment of the evangelism efforts, or lack thereof, on the part of the evangelical church. Even though the two types of evangelism (direct or servant), were utilized, it was the churches that were intentional throughout programming and ministry that were the most effective. Let it not be said of the 21st Century

church that it did not care about the salvation of senior and strictly focus on the younger generations.

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**A Critical Evaluation of Ebina Danjo's Syncretistic
Christianity With Respect to Church Revitalization in Japan**

Shuma Iwai

Introduction

Protestant Christianity was first imported into Japan through the work of missionaries during the Meiji Era after the Japanese government opened its gate to foreign countries. The Gospel was spread to Japanese people, and Christian leaders emerged during that time. However, after a remarkable growth of Christianity, Christians faced challenges in maintaining their faith due to the Japanese governmental policy, which advocated the Emperor system. Since then, the population of Christianity still remains as few as one percent in Japan today.[1]

This article will explore how Ebina Danjo's syncretistic Christianity influenced church growth during the Meiji Era and what his theology and pedagogy imply for developing church revitalization today. The following main research question will be discussed: In what ways does Ebina Danjo's syncretistic Christianity influence present church revitalization in Japan? Based on the research question, three subsidiary questions will be included: (1) What were significant elements for church growth during the Meiji Era in Japan? (2) In what ways did Ebina Danjo's theology and pedagogy relate to church growth in Japan? and (3) What missiological implications are disclosed through Ebina Danjo's theological and pedagogical approaches for church revitalization today? It is significant to examine Ebina's syncretistic Christianity because it will provide some evidences to show the importance of building a healthy church through biblical foundations, not through inappropriate paradigm shift from Japanese religious thoughts to the Western religion, which is Ebina Danjo's case.

This article will explain the historical background of Protestant Christianity during the Meiji Era and a brief biography of Ebina Danjo. It will also describe his theological and pedagogical approaches by examining his biblical principles and Shintoistic Christian view. Evaluations of his approaches from a Reformed perspective will then follow.

Historical Background

This section will provide some historical background of Christianity during the Meiji Era and a biographical background on Ebina Danjo.

Church Growth Movement

The preparatory period of missionary work in Japan began in 1859.[2] The Japanese government disestablished national seclusion and signed the Harris Treaty in 1858.[3] Although prohibition to evangelize Christianity was still in effect until 1873,[4] missionaries set foot upon the land of Japan for religious purposes. The first Protestant church was built in Yokohama on March 10, 1872.[5] There were eleven Japanese converts[6] and twenty-eight missionaries[7] in the same year. In the next year, the total population of Japanese Protestant Christians reached fifty-nine.[8] The rapid church growth occurred between 1882 and 1885. At the Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of Japan held in Osakain 1883, missionaries thought that Japan might become a Christian nation in the near future.[9] It was reported that there were approximately five thousand Christians out of forty million Japanese total population at the time.[10]

The rapid growth continued until 1890. The young Japanese were attracted to the Western cultures and studies. The number of missionaries in Japan increased from two hundred twenty-five to four hundred between 1882 and 1888.[11] The number of ordained Japanese ministers accelerated from fifty-six to one hundred five, and churches involving Japanese Christians from eighty-six to two hundred seventy-two from 1882 to 1888.[12] In addition, the number of self-supporting churches increased.

It seemed that Protestant Christianity would continuously flourish with a remarkable development. However, Christians experienced difficulty in reaching out after 1890.[13] The Constitution of the Empire of Japan and Imperial Rescript on Education were enforced in 1890. These principles promoted the Japanese people to worship the Empire and national Shinto, which caused Japanese Christians to interrupt or discard their faith. The Christian depression began and "added fuel to an often violent reac-

tion against things Western" since that time.[14] That is, the number of Christians and baptism began to decrease due to anti-Christian climate.

Bibliography of Ebina Danjo

Ebina Danjo was born on September 18, 1856 as a native of Chikugo Yanagawa Feudal Clan[15] and as a son of samurai in Japan. His birth name was Kisaburō. When he was sixteen year sold, he studied at the Kumamoto Yōgakkō, which was a school that was established in 1871 for Western learning. All instructions to the Japanese students were conducted in English. While attending that school, Ebina was inspired and guided to Christianity through Leroy Lansing Janes.[16] After his first encounter with Christ, Ebina received baptism through Janes in 1876. This was his first conversion. After the dramatic political change from the feudal to the Emperor system in 1868, Ebina no longer served for his feudal lord. Through Janes' teaching of God as the only Creator and the Lord, Ebina finally realized and found the answer of whom he had to serve.[17]

After the Kumamoto Yōgakkō, Ebina went to Doshisha University[18] in Kyoto for further studies. His second conversion occurred during his school life at Doshisha University. Due to his overload of reading, his eyesight declined. Through this experience, he struggled with his ego. He realized that all of his desires for fame, knowledge, and power were sin.[19] He relinquished these desires by putting them on the cross, and decided to trust and depend only on God as His child who has no power in himself. He was convinced of "the supreme religious experience of the Father-Son relationship."[20] He wrote of his second conversion: "I offered up the seat of sin-self on the cross of Christ and had awareness of being raised again in Christ's God centeredness."[21] His further ministry was founded on his conversions.

After he graduated from Doshisha University in April, 1879, Ebina served as a pastor at the Annaka Church in Gumma until 1884.[22] He then served as a pastor at the Maebashi Church (18931897), as a president of the Japan Christian Mission Company (1891-1893), as a pastor at Kobe Church (1893-1897), and at the Tokyo Hongō Church (1897-1920).[23] He presided as the president of Doshisha University from 1920 through 1928. He supported evangelization to the Korean people so that they could become Christians under the Japanese Empire system and its promotion of encroachment toward Korea. His service as a Christian leader continued until his death in 1937.

Ebina Danjo's Theological and Pedagogical Approaches

Ebina Danjo, a Christian leader, influenced Japanese Christianity during the Meiji Era. This section will analyze his biblical foundations and Shintoistic Christianity.

Biblical Foundations

Ebina's two religious experiences influenced his interpretation of the Scripture.[24] He made a point of his God-centered empiricism rather than the Bible itself. As disclosed in his first religious experience, he regarded the importance of a direct communication with God through a means of prayer. The communication with the Lord occurs through humans' direct feeling, which is the religious conviction. Religious experience of a direct communication with God must precede understanding the Scripture. Based on his God-centered empiricism, the Bible is merely a reference if he did not personally experience Him. In other words, experience was essential to him in understanding God.

In addition, Ebina pointed out an imperfection of the Bible.[25] He believed that writing cannot express the spirit well enough. The authors of the Scripture endeavored to record the heart of Christ as accurately as possible, but their writing should not be identified with Christ's heart. His heart should be much wealthier. The Scripture already loses its canonical characteristics. Therefore, one should not be satisfied with only reading the divine Words; rather, they need to experience Him.[26] From Ebina's perspective, religious experience is fundamental in order to understand the Bible.

Moreover, Ebina's view of Jesus Christ can be seen in his article published in *Shinjin* in 1902, in which he argued about the doctrine of the Trinity.[27] His interpretation of Jesus Christ was just as an intermediate between the Divine and human beings, not as God.[28] He considered that Jesus Christ himself does not have deity. Instead, he asserted the humanity of Christ. Due to his God-centered empiricism, his ultimate goal was to correspond with Him as the Father-Son relationship.[29] He viewed that he could enter the situation where "God exists in him, and he is in Him."[30]

Shintoistic Christianity

The Japanese government began to establish "a national identity based on State Shinto and the emperor system."[31] The Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890 also placed the Emperor in the center of "Japanese personal, familial, communal, educational, vocational and national piety."[32] As a result, Japanese

Christians experienced difficulties in responding to national change. Christian leaders were forced to respond to (reject, accept, or cooperate with) State Shinto.

While other Christian leaders resisted governmental policy and denied patriotism and the Emperor,[33] Ebina had a different view. He thought that Japan would become a Christian country, not by disrespecting his nation, but by supporting the Emperor system and patriotism.[34] This caused Ebina to attempt to overlap his original Christianity beliefs with Shinto beliefs. He was a Christian leader who advocated nationalism. He believed that Japan is a chosen country by the Lord, and its nation should become a church of Jesus Christ.[35] He sought to achieve this purpose by supporting nationalism.

Another motive for Ebina to support nationalism was missionaries' attitude toward the Japanese people. After Japan discontinued its national isolation, missionaries who had been waiting for their missions to Japan for a long time finally entered into Japan. Their aim was to deliver the Gospel to the Japanese people. With a removal of the prohibition of Christianity on February 24, 1873,[36] missionaries were allowed to evangelize Christianity without much regulation.

However, Ebina pointed out that although missionaries proclaimed to evangelize under the concept of philanthropy, their interests were in increasing the membership of their own denominations and they were without much philanthropy or patriotism of Japan.[37] They also seemed not to have a firm understanding of the Japanese culture. The dominant missionaries considered Christianity as "antithetical to Japanese religious culture."[38] The Japanese people, who already lived under the circumstances of Shinto, Buddhist, and various folk practices, found that "the stress by missionaries on exclusive belief and practice required too great a reorientation."[39] Missionaries' attitude to contradict the beliefs and customs of the Japanese people made Ebina disappointed.

Ebina felt that missionaries disdained beliefs and the history of the Japanese citizens,[40] and that they also denied the Japanese culture and even people. Some Christian leaders endeavored at the de-Westernization under a strong nationalistic environment.[41] Ebina also began to depend less on missionaries, tried to build a more Japanized Christianity, and incorporated the concept of Shinto. He wrote:

> those who disregard Japanese spirit undervalue selves....the Japanese spirit is evidently the spirit of the Japanese nation....We are identified with Christ,...we

then become representatives of the Japanese spirit.[42]

He made much of his nation and the spirit of Shinto. He insisted on "an accommodating adjustment of Shinto and Christianity."[43] He wrote, "we [the Japanese Christians] are allowed to see a religion like Shinto as part of Christianity. Why should we contrast it with Christianity for argument?"[44] He connected the concept of the monotheism of Christianity to the Emperor as sovereign in the Japanese nation. The following principles show his Shintoistic Christianity: "to have respect for the Emperor as one's lord, love the nation of Japan, and value the Japanese culture."[45]

Ebina's syncretistic Christianity later guided him to countenance the Japanese assimilation in China, Russia, and Korea as opposed to the contradiction of the Japanese government's encroachment by other Japanese Christian leaders.[46] He especially advanced mission to Korea in order for Koreans to "become actively involved in the Greater Japanese Empire."[47] The notion of imperialism itself is not recognized as a feature of Christianity, neither is it a Western characteristic. As a result, Ebina's support for invasion and assimilationism among the Koreans externally resists Christianity. However, his desire was for extending more Christians in other countries by promoting foreign citizens to become Japanese. He believed that evangelizing Christianity with accordance to the Emperor system and State Shinto would result in making Japan a Christian nation.[48] In this regard, Ebina's thought was syncretized between concepts of Christianity and Shinto.

Discussions

This article has examined Ebina's theological and pedagogical approaches through a review of literature. It will then evaluate his theological view with a comparison to a Reformed perspective, analyze his ministry, and argue some missiological implications for church revitalization.

Critiques of Ebina's Theology from a Reformed Perspective

Due to Ebina's emphasis on religious experience, he considered the Bible as just a reference. He primarily valued the unity with God through prayer. He also thought there was a limitation of the Scripture because writers of the Bible were humans who were unable to express the divine Word one hundred percent precisely. It seems that Ebina did not place a special emphasis on an inerrancy of the Scripture, nor did he consider the Bible as Christian canons.

In contrast to Ebina's view on the Bible, one significance for a Reformed perspective is that everything is grounded in God's self-revelation, which is the Bible. The Scripture is "God's Word, God's witness, God's revelation concerning his Son."[49] The Bible is, therefore, infallible and should be the absolute standard and foundation for believers. From this perspective, Ebina's perspective on the Scripture seemed not to be close to the Reformed view.

Furthermore, it can be pointed out that Ebina's advocate for nationalism and favor for encroachment to foreign countries to make their citizens Japanese and eventually build their countries as Christian nations might have resulted from his strong patriotism. It is understandable that he loved his country so much and endeavored to establish Christian churches possessing unique Japanese characteristics that the Japanese people would follow without hesitation, not churches that are influenced only by the Western cultures or thoughts. His chauvinism caused him to combine his ministry with nationalism. He, indeed, placed his loyalty toward the Lord and committed himself to serve Him; yet, he still focused on Japanese people and their nation to make them convert to Christianity. It may be interpreted that his devotion to the nation of Japan or ethno-centrism preceded his commitment to God, which should have been transposed in an opposite way in terms of a Reformed perspective. The foundation for Christians needs to be rooted in glorification of God.[50]

Further evaluation for Ebina's theology can be performed based on another Reformed perspective. Christians ought to acknowledge the sovereignty of God, which is revealed in His Word.[51] Ebina's interpretation of the Bible was grounded on his religious experience to unite with God. His two conversions and emphasis on a unity with the Lord only from a direct communication with Him led Ebina to support a strong God-centered empiricism. He seemed not to view that everything is in God's sovereignty. Rather, he stressed men's experience or context-oriented thought rather than Bible-oriented.

Critiques of Ebina's Pedagogy for Church Growth

Ebina's syncretistic thought in matching the Lord in Christianity with the Emperor in the Japanese nation promoted his nationalism. His humanitarian notion encouraged him to evangelize not only the Japanese people but also people in other countries. This concept was harmonized with the Japanese government politics that aimed to colonize Korea. It can be explained that Ebina served as a citizen of Japan before contributing himself as a child of God.

His syncretistic view and Shintoistic Christianity influenced church growth. In fact, it is reported that the dropout rate for Congregational churches in which Ebina was involved was the most remarkable among six Protestant denominations between 1890 and 1902. A percentage of membership leakage for Congregational churches recorded ninety-four.[52]

In addition, it can be pointed out that Ebina attempted to exhort Christianity by seeking principles that would follow Japanese thoughts and traditions. He seemed not to comply with the biblical principles because his primary focus was on religious experiences rather than on God's teachings. It would be appreciated that he exerted himself to build Christianity that would fit into the minds of the Japanese people. However, the question can be left on where he grounded his ministry and whether his pedagogy was founded in biblical principles or not. In his ministry, the role of the Scripture might have been disregarded or might not have been as the absolute standard as it should have been. This might have created challenges in church growth as the statistics show reduction of Japanese Christian population.

Missiological Implications for Church Revitalization

It is crucial for Christians to repent and realize the importance of building a sound church for church revitalization.[53] A healthy church is a place in which Christians believe in the Word of God. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

Not only do Christians need to believe in the Word of God, but they also have to go back to it. Like the Reformers called the church to go back to the divine Word, we must follow their example.[54] Because, as described above, the Scripture is about God, written by Him, and is inerrant, Christians must refer to His teaching for biblical guidance for any case in their life and church. Not like Ebina who pointed out the fallibility of the Bible and depended on God-centered empiricism, Christians are to depend, trust, and obey the Word of God.

Lastly, for establishing a sound church, the significance of true biblical preaching should be stressed. As Berkhof stated, one of the marks of a wholesome church is "the true preaching of the Word."[55] Preaching that is grounded on only the Word of God is a biblical way to maintain the church and make her to be the center of the faithful.[56] Unlike Ebina's example to deliver the Gospel to others, which was rooted in religious experiences rather than the Bible per se, Christians are called to be God's disciples who claim His Word is the truth, depend on it, and spread

it in the way He told them to do so.

Conclusion

This article has explored Ebina Danjo's theological and pedagogical approaches in terms of church revitalization in Japan with the following research question: In what ways does Ebina Danjo's syncretistic Christianity influence church revitalization in Japan? It has revealed that his theology was embedded in his God-centered empiricism and seemed not to be identified with true biblical principles. His ethnocentrism and effort to be independent from the Western made him create a Japanized Christianity and syncretize Christianity with State Shinto, and in consequence, caused a church depression. From his theology and pedagogy, it was suggested that Christians should believe in and follow the Word of God and spread His biblical teaching. This will be the key for erecting a sound church and bringing church revitalization in the present Japanese context.

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16. Leroy Lansing Janes was a veteran and employed as a teacher at the Kumamoto Yōgakkō through Guido F. Verbeck. He was a Reformed Church of America educational missionary. Although he was a laity, he taught English, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geography, and world history at the school and the Bible at his home. Ebina was one of his students. See Richard H. Drummond, "Janes Leroy Lansing," in Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions; Shimo, Monogatari, 52-54; Yoshinare Akiko, Ebina Danjo no Seiji Shiso (The political thought of Ebina Danjo) (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1982), 13; and Unuma Hiroko, Shiryō Niyoru Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi (The Japanese Christian history through historical materials), 2d ed. (Saitama, Japan: Seigakuin Daigaku Shuppankai, 1997), 27.

17. Yoshinare, Ebina Danjo no Seiji Shisō, 17-18.

18. Doshisha University was originally established as a secondary school for boys by Niijima Jō in 1875. It was recognized as the first Christian school in 1912. See Helen J. Ballhatchet, "The Modern Missionary Movement in Japan: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox," in Handbook of Christianity in Japan, ed. Mark R. Mullins (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 44.

19. Ishida Yoshiro, "The Role of Liberal Theology in Japan at the Turn of this Century," Currents in Theology and Mission 19, no. 5 (1992): 360.

20. Ishida, "The Role of Liberal Theology in Japan at the Turn of this Century, 359.

21. Ebina Danjo, "Shohihan wo Yonde Futatabi Yo ga Kirisutokan wo Akirakanisu" (To clarify Christianity through reading some criticism), Shinjin 2, no. 9 (1902): Shinjinsha.

22. Ebina Danjo was a leader of Congregational churches in Japan.

23. Dohi Akio, "Ebina Danjo," in A Dictionary of Asian Christianity.

24. Ebina was influenced by liberal theology from Germany, especially Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). Ashina Sadamichi, "Kirisutokyo Shisō Kenkyu kara mita Ebina Danjo" (Ebina Danjo in studies of Christian thought) Gendai Kirisutokyo Shisō Kenkyukai (The modern study of Christianity and social problems) 2 (March 2004): 1.

25. Hashimoto Shigeo, "Ebina ni okeru Seisyo Kaishaku" (The interpretation of the Bible in Danjo Ebina), Kirisutokyo Shakai Kenkyu (The study of Christianity and social problems) 23 (1975): 178-79.

26. Ibid., 79.

27. Ebina discussed logos written in the beginning of the Book of John in this article. Shimo, Monogatari: Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi, 274.

28. Ibid.

29. Furuya Yasuo, and others, eds., Nihon Shingaku Shi (The history of Japanese theology) (Tokyo: Yorudansha, 1992), 39.

30. Unuma Hiroko, Kindai Nihon no Kirisutokyo Shisōka Tachi (The Christian thinkers in modern Japan) (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisutokyo Shuppankyoku, 1988), 115.

31. Mark Mullins, Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 18.

32. Thomas John Hastings, "Japan's Protestant Schools and Churches in Light of Early Mission Theory and History," in Handbook of Christianity in Japan, ed. Mark R. Mullins (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 112.

33. The lése majesté incident (fukei jiken) occurred in 1891. Uchimura Kanzō was forced to resign from teaching at a high school due to his rejection of bow during the school's first ceremonial reading of the Imperial Rescript on Education. Hastings, "Japan's Protestant Schools and Churches in Light of Early Mission Theory and History," 112.

34. Shimo, Monogatari: Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi, 262.

35. Ibid., 260.

36. Ebisawa and Ōuchi, Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi, 165.

37. Shimo, Monogatari: Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi, 266-67.

38. Mark R. Mullins, "Indigenous Christian Movements," in Handbook of Christianity in Japan, ed. Mark R. Mullins (Leiden: Brill, 2003),

39. Ibid., 147.

40. Shimo, Monogatari: Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi, 261.

41. Mullins, "Indigenous Christian Movements," 149.

42. Ebina Danjo, Shin Nihon Seishin (The new Japanese spirit) (Oumi, Japan: Oumi Kyodai Shuppanbu, 1934), 271.

43. Ishida, "The Role of Liberal Theology in Japan at the Turn of

this Century," 362.

44. Ebina Danjo, Nihon Kokumin to Kirisutokyo no Enka (The affinity between the Japanese nation and Christianity) (Tokyo: Hokubunkan, 1930), 107.

45. Sekioka Kazushige, "Ebina Danjo ni okeru Sekai Shugi to Nihon Shugi" (Internationalism and nationalism in Ebina Danjo), Kirisutokyo Shakai Kenkyu (The study of Christianity and social problems) 4 (1995): 39.

46. The Japanese government imposed Korea to become its protectorate in 1905. After five years, in 1910, the Korea-Japan Annexation Treaty was signed.

The Korea-Japan Annexation Treaty prompted Ebina to support mission over Korea. The assimilationism by the Japanese authority was along with the motive of its imperialism. The government intentionally employed Christianity to support this policy. Ebina accepted its offer. See Moo-Gil Kim. "Ebina Danjo no Tyōsen Dendō to Nihonka Mondai ni Tsuite" (On Ebina Danjo's conception: Japanization through the mission in Korea), Kirisutokyo Shakai Mondai Kenkyu (The study of Christianity and social problems) 46 (1998): 234.

47. Dohi Akio, "Ebina Danjo," in A Dictionary of Asian Christianity.

48. Shimo, Monogatari: Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi, 279.

49. Edmund P. Clowney, "The Missionary Flame of Reformed Theology," in Theological Perspectives on Church Growth, ed. Harvie M. Conne (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1976), 147.

50. Clowney, "The Missionary Flame of Reformed Theology," 134.

51. Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, new ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 76.

52. Yamamori, Church Growth in Japan, 74. Shimo reports that the number of baptisms in Congregational churches decreased from twenty-eight hundred and one to five hundred nineteen from 1888 to 1900. Shimo, Monogatari: Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi, 228.

53. Harry L. Reeder, III and David Swavely explain three steps of the biblical paradigm for church revitalization: remember, repent, and recover. See Harry L. Reeder, III and David Swavely, From Embers to a Flame: How God can Revitalize your Church (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 31-50.

54. Edmund P. Clowney, "The Missionary Flame of Reformed Theology," 128.

55. Berkhof describes the marks of the church. See Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 576-78. Mark E. Dever states the usefulness of sound expositional preaching, for it is one of the signs of church growth. See Mark E. Dever, Nine Marks of a Healthy Church, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: Center for Church Reform, 2001), 9-12; Michael F. Ross, Preaching for Revitalization: How to Revitalize your Church through your Pulpit

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(Glasgow, Scotland: Mentor, 2006).
    56. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 577.

The Protean Church

Allan Karr

Preface

It has been said that there are no original thoughts. Perhaps the best that can be said is that someone would take old tenets and ideas and arrange them with a new twist so that it appears to be original. I have no illusion that either of these things is happening in this article. Every time I am tempted to think that I have an original thought, I see it in print somewhere soon after that. I have come to realize that my life and worldview is a quilt of sorts. There is fabric in my quilt that I know where it came from and there is fabric that was donated from an unknown source. This article is a little section of that quilt, and I know where some of the fabric came from and some of it came from an unknown source. Nevertheless, I am not trying to claim any of it is original. I am trying to exercise good scholarship by citing and documenting where I can, but I know there are ideas here, which will have been someone else's but it is an unknown donor to my quilt. Ultimately, I hope that if there were credit given anywhere that God would receive the glory.

This article is actually the foundational idea that examines some symptoms of ecclesiological shifts that are being observed and documented in the "church" meta-narrative. As a disclaimer, I am aware that the use and meaning of words are very important. I have discovered that the field of ecclesiology brings to the surface great passions among some scholars and practitioners of faith. Most of the issues occur when a word is used that someone in the audience interprets as having a different meaning than that of the author. Understanding this, I have tried to use words in their most common meaning or to define them carefully even if the common meaning might be misinterpreted.

What is a "Church"?

There is currently much dialogue on how to define the word "church" in the confessional community and much of the discussion is an attempt to clear up the lack of clarity about how certain words or phrases are being used, and the debate is both in and out of academic circles. As a church planter practitioner and as a professor, missiologist, and ecclesiologist, a common question asked officially and unofficially is how the word "church" is defined. In order to establish a common ground of understanding for discussing ecclesiology and to develop the thoughts of this article, it seems strategic to first define what is meant by the word "church."

In 2005, the International Mission Board (Southern Baptist) in an appendix to their doctrinal guideline adopted a document that was designed to give guidance to the missionaries working in international settings as to what was considered a "church." This document is known as the *IMB's Church Definition and Guidelines* (written by Clyde Meador, Executive Vice-President, IMB) and was dated May 10, 2005. The document is less than two pages long and articulates ten guidelines for missionaries to observe while fulfilling their mission activities worldwide. While all ten of their guidelines are significant, three of them apply specifically to the issues being raised in this article. They are:

1. A church is intentional about being a church. Members think of themselves as a church. They are committed to one another and to God (associated by covenant) in pursuing all that Scripture requires of a church. . .
2. A church meets regularly for worship, prayer, the study of God's word, and fellowship. Members of the church minister to one another's needs, hold each other accountable, and exercise church discipline as needed. Members encourage one another and build each other up in holiness, maturity in Christ, and love.
3. A church embraces its responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission, both locally and globally, from the beginning of its existence as a church.[1]

All ten of the guidelines are designed to create parameters that IMB missionaries should follow as they perform their roles in other cultures as missionary church planters. The three guidelines listed above, however, are significant as they are key in the definition of how the word "church" is being defined in this context. To defer to the definition given in a doctrinal guideline does not usually suffice, as clarification is almost always required. To give a definition in this article is not intended to be viewed as a

redefinition of the term, but to preempt the obligatory need for clarification. Therefore, for the purposes of this article, the definition/clarification of "church" for this context will be as follows:

A church is a group of transformed followers of Jesus, who have made a commitment to be the body of Christ in their community and the world, and live accordingly.

This definition/clarification takes into account and addresses all the significant issues such as salvation, regeneration, baptism, membership, giftedness, pastoral authority, and the purposes of the church (including worship, fellowship, missions, ministry, discipleship, and prayer) that are crucial to the confessional community. If a person lives as a part of a church according to that definition, all of these significant issues are reduced as particular foci and encompassed in the totality of what it means to live as a covenanted follower of Jesus according to the Bible. What it doesn't address is the extra-biblical requirements some have added to the definition such as buildings, land, letters, ordination, constitution, incorporation, name, and a narrow requirement of the administration of the sacraments or ordinances. This is intentional if the definition is going to be narrow enough to be defined by the guidelines of Scripture but broad enough to assist in a movement of the Kingdom of God.

What is "Protean"?

The second word in the title that needs to be defined is the term "protean." This word was first encountered by this author in a religion article in *U.S. News & World Report.*[2] In an article profiling the religious attitudes of the emerging generations the following statement was made:

There are two types of believers, says Martin Marty, professor emeritus of history and theology at the University of Chicago: "protean" people who shop in supermarket of ideas and values and "constrictive" people who "rule out all other signals except the one they choose."[3]

"Protean" is a word which captured this author's imagination in the statement. *Merriam-Webster Online* was first consulted where it was basically defined and the pronunciation was given: 'prO-tE-An.[4] Further search of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* revealed:

pro-te-an *adj.* 1: of or resembling Proteus: variable 2: readily assuming different shapes or roles 3: displaying great diversity[5]

This was supplemented by *Roget's II Thesaurus*:

protean adjective
Having many aspects, uses, or abilities. VERSATILE[6]

As the historical meaning of the word was explored, it became understood that it came from Proteus. Proteus was a deity in Greek mythology, an early sea-god that Homer called the "Old Man of the Sea." According to Homer, Proteus' home was the sandy island of Pharos[7] located off the coast of the Nile Delta.[8] Proteus was also known as a prophet and a herdsman of sea-beasts. The story that Homer tells of Proteus is probably the most well known and establishes for what Proteus is reputed.

In the *Odyssey*, Menelaus relates a story to Telemachus regarding Proteus. Menelaus had been detained by the gods (no winds) on the island of Pharos for twenty days on his journey home from the Trojan War. Proteus' daughter, Eidothea, rescued him. Menelaus learned from her that if he could capture Proteus he could force him to reveal which of the gods he had offended, and how he could propitiate them and return home. True to Eidothea's word, Proteus emerged from the sea to sleep among his colony of seals. Menelaus captured him and held him even though Proteus took the forms of a lion, a serpent, a leopard, a pig, water, and a tree. Proteus then was forced to answer truthfully and also revealed to Menelaus that his brother Agamemnon had been murdered on his return home, that Ajax the Lesser had been shipwrecked and killed, and that Odysseus was stranded on Calypso's Isle.[9]

It is from stories like this that Proteus gained his reputation of having the ability to "shapeshift." Other ancient historians have commented on this aspect of Proteus. Nonnus in *Dionysiaca* says:

In the neighbouring island of Pharos, Proteus of many turns, may he appear in all his diversity of shapes.[10]

Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* states:

Some have the gift to change and change again in many forms, like Proteus, creature of the encircling seas, who sometimes seemed a lad, sometimes a lion, sometimes a snake men feared to touch, sometimes a charging boar, or else a sharp-horned bull; often he was a stone, often a tree, or feigning flowing water seemed a river or water's opposite a flame of fire.[11]

Philostratus in Life of Apollonius of Tyana relates:

> Proteus, who changes his form so much in Homer, in the guise of an Aigyption Daimon ... I need hardly explain to readers of the poets the quality of Proteus and his reputation as regards wisdom; how versatile he was, and for ever changing his form, and defying capture, and how he had the reputation of knowing both past and future.[12]

Proteus was known as the ancient sea god who could change his shape at will, easily assuming different shapes and forms and exhibiting great variety and diversity. From Proteus comes the adjective "protean" which has come to mean turning with ease from various tasks, fields, or skills; versatile; mutable; capable of assuming many forms.

In a Google search of the Internet for "protean," the list of hits includes all kinds of software to include DNA programs, network performance evaluation, new media design, and a manufacturer of counting systems for health physics, radiochemistry, and nuclear fuel cycle applications. Further research of the word reveals that it is used in a variety of fields including the natural sciences, social sciences, psychiatry, and psychology to name a few. In his chapter on "The Changing Psychological Landscape," Robert Jay Lifton in his book *The Protean Self* makes the following claim:

> (P)roteanism involves a quest for authenticity and meaning, a form-seeking assertion of self. The recognition of complexity and ambiguity may well represent a certain maturation in our concept of self. The protean self seeks to be both *fluid and grounded*, however tenuous that combination…Proteanism, then, is a balancing act between responsive shapeshifting, on the one hand, and efforts to consolidate and cohere, on the other.[13]

In thinking about the word "protean," a search of new uses of words that would accurately describe and communicate the clarified definition of the church as detailed above. "Protean" began to fill a void that had been experienced in trying to communicate and explain this missiologist's concepts about church and to describe an ecclesiological shift that is being observed in the "church" meta-narrative. Since "protean" is used in many contexts, most of them secular and/or non-Christian, a careful definition of the word is needed as it is used in the context of this presentation. Therefore, "protean" in the ecclesiological context is defined as follows:

Protean is descriptive of a church model which tenu-

ously combines a foundational grounding of the tenets of faith to scripture while at the same time being fluid, diverse, and versatile, possessing the ability to "shape-shift" according to the needs of the community and culture.

As a point of clarification, protean is not a synonym for any other model like traditional church, purpose-driven church, cell church, house church, et al. It is looking at the church through a different lens in that each of the models could conceivably be "protean" while at the same time being distinct. It also follows that there are churches within each model that would not be "protean." To illustrate, not all protean churches are house churches and not all house churches are protean and the same could be said for every other model. Now that the key words are defined, the rest of the article will attempt to flesh out the appellation of "The Protean Church."

Ecclesiological Shifts in the "Church" Meta-Narrative

In George Barna's recent book *Revolution*, he attempts to document an undercurrent of a movement of revolutionary proportions that he proclaims is largely still below the radar. In his last chapter, Barna states:

> This is a great time to be alive-especially for those who love Jesus Christ. The opportunities to minister are unparalleled: millions of searching hearts and agonizing souls, combined with the abundance of resources Christians have at their disposal, makes this a very special era for the Church. Throw in the rapid and profound cultural changes occurring as well as the struggles local churches are undergoing, and we have the environment in which the birth of a spiritual revolution is inevitable. The confluence of those elements demanded a dramatic response, and the emerging Revolution represents such a historic thrust.[14]

In the last forty years, the traditional church has completed the century long shift from a family or community congregation to a "Business/Institutional Model." Almost every traditional church has adopted, perhaps wisely, some basic business practices that were not common several generations ago. For example, most churches have budgets so they can set salaries for their pastors and staff and to predict how much they project to spend on various programs and services. They have policy manuals, comprehensive insurance coverage, non-profit corporation

status, elect corporate officers, and file corporate tax documents with the state and federal government. This is standard operating procedure for most businesses and has become virtually necessary for "doing business" as a church in the United States, and is becoming true in the global community.

In the 1980's and 90's the church began to borrow other business savvy practices. Churches began to commonly develop "Mission Statements" and "Vision Statements" which were concepts from the business world, which transferred quite easily and even used words that were arguably biblical. Church planters were taught to develop these statements prior to launch (a business term), in addition to "Core Values" that wouldn't be compromised, another good business principle applied to the church. Furthermore, business models of leadership began to influence how congregations thought about structuring their church leadership and this spilled over into issues of polity in the church. One prominent way to evaluate the quality of a church structure has become how well the church modeled and adopted good business practices. Ironically, in most churches, the "business meetings" are sparsely attended and usually are the arena where division in the church is birthed or aired out.

Simultaneous to churches posturing to become good businesses, the established church in the United States has become more institutional. Denominations either were influenced to adopt the business practices of their churches or they taught the churches how to be better as businesses. The resulting consequence is that the Protestant "church" and denominations in America have developed into powerful institutions that some would say vaguely echo the institutional church that they worked to diligently to break away from and change during the Reformation.

This is not an overstatement if one considers the intention of the Reformation was to correct the Catholic Church by appeal to the exclusivity of the Scripture's authority, and to reject Christian tradition as a source of authority alongside the Bible or in addition to the Bible. Protestants declared that the Roman church was mistaken for adding human traditions to the Word of God. The Protestant perspective was that all things necessary for salvation and concerning faith and life are taught in the Scripture, and that these truths are stated clearly enough for the ordinary believer to find it the Bible and understand them. Consequently, Protestants maintain that the Scripture alone is the authority. Catholic opponents maintain that the Scripture by itself is insufficient as the authority of the people of God, and that tradition and the teaching authority of the church must be added

to the Scripture. In the 16th century as Luther and others studied the Bible with a greater care and depth than people in the church had done in centuries, they began to discover that some traditions actually contradicted the Bible. "Sola scriptura" (scripture alone) is one of five important tenets of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century.

The ecclesiological shift in the "church" meta-narrative in the 21st century is accompanied by a "neo-sola scriptura" tenet. Protean followers of Jesus place a high value on the authority of scripture and believe that some traditions have been incorporated into the doctrines of the church. For example, while ordination has value and meaning in church life, to have a position that ordination is a requirement to baptize or administer the ordinances is a traditional value that is extra-biblical. Furthermore, land or buildings can be a blessing to a church, but to require that a church have either land or a building as some associations do is equally extra-biblical. The shift in ecclesiology is accompanied by a new commitment to "sola scriptura," where scripture alone, not traditions, give guidelines for ecclesiology.

The relatively "under the radar" shift in the church meta-narrative that is occurring is being validated by how it resonates with a growing segment of followers of Jesus. Knowing how to refer to it is slippery and thus the creative attempt to redefine "protean" with a new ecclesiological application. The definition being used to describe this shift in the church meta-narrative is: Protean is descriptive of a church model which tenuously combines a foundational *grounding* of the tenets of faith to scripture while at the same time being *fluid*, diverse, and versatile, possessing the ability to "shapeshift" according to the needs of the community and culture.

This definition has two very important aspects. First, it describes a church that is grounded in the tenets of faith, one of which is the authority of scripture, which informs all other areas of belief and lifestyle. As the church disciples the community in covenant with each other, it provides a deep foundation, upon which all activities of the Body of Christ are grounded. Second, it describes a church that is fluid, meaning that it can quickly adapt and respond, that is "shapeshift," to meet the immediate needs of the community of faith and the larger community.[15] To be clear, being "fluid" does not mean that the church compromises her foundational grounding. It is a deep commitment to the tenets of faith while being methodologically and practically versatile.

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The Protean Church is "Grounded"

While being "grounded" could be a punishment for a pilot or a teenager, a pulverized coffee bean, or an electrical connection, in this context it is meant to be a foundational stabilizing strength for the church in belief and practice. This foundational stabilizing strength is a commitment to and growing understanding of the historical tenets of faith,[16] understanding that one of the tenets is the authority of Scripture, which informs and guides the parameters of the others. It is often that new models of church are subjected to criticism, predominantly from those within the existing established church. The Great Awakening during the colonial years of the United States received energetic resistance from *within* the Church.

> George Whitefield, John Wesley, and other standard-bearers of the revival withstood harsh attacks from established churches who complained bitterly that the itinerants used unorthodox means of reaching people, disrupted the status and flow of existing ministries, threatened the stability of society, and undermined the security and authority of pastors and denominational executives. Today, however, we praise God that Whitefield and his colleagues persisted in thinking outside the box and enduring the unwarranted abuse from their spiritual kinfolk.[17]

In the last couple of decades, whenever a new model or methodology emerges in the practice of the church, it has inevitably been criticized usually with the argument that the new methodology is not doctrinally sound or that it is dangerous into what it might become if the old parameters of methodology are not present. This author values God's Church too much to propose a perspective that would dilute the power or foundational truths of the teaching of Scripture. However, the protean church could potentially digress into something deemed to be heretical, but seems no more likely to do so than any other model. In regards to the possible presence of heresy in emerging church practices, Barna points out:

> Warnings about heresy creeping into the minds and the hearts of the Christian body are always worthy of consideration. However, it is just as easy to identify heretical teachings proposed from America's pulpits as it is to identify heretical Revolutionaries. After all, our research shows that only 51 percent of the pastors of Protestant churches have a biblical worldview! The embarrassing

belief profile of Christians across the nation can be largely attributed to the mediocre teaching they have received in sermons, Sunday school classes, and small groups.[18]

To be clear, by definition any model of church can be protean. Mega-churches might be protean, and cell churches might not be protean. By definition, a "protean church" is one where the Body of Christ has a foundational grounding in the tenets of faith, as taught by the Scripture. The practices of the Protean Church then must be consistent with what is necessary to make this true not only now, but in the future.

One of the purposes of the church is to disciple the people who are followers of Jesus about what that means to live in faith and practice. In the Protean Church discipleship is an important component to being grounded. No particular method or model is prescribed but it is observed that the churches that would be identified as "protean" are the ones where mentoring is present in some form. In a healthy church, older men train the younger men and older women train the younger women (Titus 2:2-4). In healthy churches parents train their children to love God and follow His ways (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:4). Church leaders take responsibility to train emerging leaders as Barnabas did for Paul (Acts 11:25-26). Mentoring may be defined in several ways, however no substitute can be made for the commitment of time that is a necessary investment by both parties. The most effective mentoring does not occur by the protégé only listening to sermons or reading books. Personal relationship between people and dialogue and facing the journeys of life together with a focus on the Scripture brings out the godliness of who we are in Christ transformed, and results in a foundational "grounding" to tenets of faith, so that no matter how "fluid" the methodology becomes, the Protean Church remains faithful and vigorously growing in their faith.

The Protean Church is "Fluid"

In 1999, Leonard Sweet wrote a book entitled *AquaChurch: Essential Leadership Arts for Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture.*[19] In this book however, the metaphor used is that the *culture* is a fluid body of water and that the church is a boat, which is piloted by people who were guided by God. This is a drastically different metaphor than is being used to explain the Protean Church. In the Protean metaphor, the church is fluid, which Webster's defines as "likely or tending to change or move."[20] The metaphor does not necessarily imply the church is

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liquid although it does bring to mind the words of Jesus when He said to the Samaritan woman "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give to him shall never thirst; but the water that I give him shall become in him *a well of water springing up to eternal life.*"[21] "Fluid" in this context means versatile, on the move, able to change, shapeshift, and adapt quickly to the needs of the church and the culture. To be clear, it is not the doctrine or the tenets of faith which are fluid, but the structure and methodology of the lifestyle of being the church in the community and the world. There are at least two distinct ways the Protean Church is fluid: being on the move or "missional" and shapeshifting, that is, taking different forms as needed to be responsive and obedient to God's leading and direction.

It is observed that many people define church by the gathering. In different contexts where people are defining church I will hear people use the passage from Matthew 18:20 where Jesus says, "For where two or three have gathered in My name, there I am in their midst."[22] Believing themselves to be broadminded, they will feel as if they have given the biblical least common denominator for being a church. This author disagrees, as would many who are in the established church, however for very different reasons. Established church criticisms would argue that the verse alone is lacking essential elements to provide needed structure and authority to be a church. It is pointed out however that the verse is incomplete as well but not because it lacks structural components, but because it lacks the missional components. Being the church is not all about the gathering. Many would point out that Hebrews 10:25 says, "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of His coming back is drawing near."[23] This verse truly states the followers of Jesus should meet together regularly, but it doesn't prescribe that it has to be a formalized meeting in a certain building on a certain day. The protean church sees this verse giving great freedom to be fluid as she decides the form, time, and place of her gatherings.

However, it goes much deeper than that. The protean church understands from its foundational grounding that we are not just a "church" when we gather together; we are the church 24/7 all week long. An established church might gather together for several hours week, as would a protean church. A protean church realizes however that they are also the church on mission when they leave the gathering. Actually, if you take all the commands of Jesus in the Bible, you have to leave the gathering of believers and go into the community to obey most of them.

Because of this truth, by sheer time and energy expended, the church is more the church when it is scattered all week long in its daily activities than it is when it is gathered for a few hours. For example, in a healthy church, we worship God when we meet together, but we are supposed to worship God all the time. If we worship Him all week, we are the church more scattered than when gathered. This is the on the move, missional aspect of being fluid that helps define the Protean Church.

To be clear, meeting together is part of being a church, yet the Protean Church can be fluid in their meeting times and perhaps their places and fluidly missional the rest of the week. This is a challenge and a hope. It is a challenge as a follower of Jesus to be missional, and a hope about the deep commitment of the emerging generations of followers of Jesus.

The second distinct way that the Protean Church is fluid is in its ability to be very versatile and even shapeshift as it adapts to the needs of the community of believers and the community at large. One of the ways this occurs is that as autonomous churches, they are adopting more efficient models of decision making than the more traditional committee and business meeting model. In a true expression of the tenets of soul competency and priesthood of believers, Protean Churches can make decisions quickly, mobilize quickly, and change directions on a dime.

Additionally, while the metaphor of the chameleon is often pejorative, there is much that can be positively stated about the ability to show versatility to quickly adapt to take advantage of God-given opportunities. This shapeshifting is not disingenuous. To the contrary, it shows the passion and creativity of the church as it searches for meaningful ways to be seen as contributing to the communities in which they live and work. It also allows them to very genuinely appear to be a traditional church if the occasion calls for them to ordain and commission a man to be a chaplain in the armed forces. The Protean Church can meet legal parameters for governmental regulations or respond to the requirements of the credentialing of the associations and conventions. This nature of the Protean Church adds credibility to a lost world, as they are impressed with the passion and efficiency of the church. This fluidity is a distinctive quality that the term "protean" attempts to identify.

The Protean Church: Conclusion

The world is changing at a rapid pace. Globalization is occurring at an exponential rate. There is a world economy. Technology is advancing into many new frontiers. There is a cultural

confluence in the United States. "America has become the country with the most ethnolinguistic people groups residing within it."[24] There is additionally an emerging culture of Christians all-over the world, many of which we see in our classrooms. In the midst of all these changes, it is no surprise that the church is changing as well. Barna observes:

> There can be no turning back at this point, no return to the old ways and the comfortable forms. Although we cannot predict what the Church will look like twenty years hence, we can be confident that it will be more different than similar to the Church at the start of the twenty-first century.[25]

If this is true it is more than a slightly daunting reality, but it is also a great hope for the future. Christendom can find common ground in a shared heart to be the body of Christ. The desire is that the concept of the Protean Church is seen less as a criticism of what is and more as a challenge and a hope for the future for healthy and vibrant body of Christ in the confessional community, where all models of churches are valued as they are grounded in the tenets of faith and contribute to the Kingdom of God.

Appendix 1	IMB's Ecclesiological State
	(From Clyde Meador, Exec. VP, IMB)
	May 10, 2005

Church Definition and Guidelines

Definition

The definition of a local church is given in the 2000 edition of the Baptist Faith and Message:

"A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

Guidelines

We believe that every local church is autonomous under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of His inerrant word. This is as true overseas as it is in the United States. Some churches to which we relate overseas may make decisions in doctrine and practice, which we would not choose. Nevertheless, we are accountable to God and to Southern Baptists for the foundation that we lay when we plant churches, for the teaching that we give when we train church leaders, and for the criteria that we use when we count churches. In our church planting and teaching ministries, we will seek to lay a foundation of beliefs and practices that are consistent with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, although local churches overseas may express those beliefs and practices in different ways according to the needs of their cultural settings. Flowing from the definition of a church given above and from the Scriptures from which this definition is derived, we will observe the following guidelines in church planting, leadership training and statistical reporting.

1. A church is intentional about being a church. Members think of themselves as a church. They are committed to one another and to God (associated by covenant) in pursuing all that Scripture requires of a church.
2. A church has an identifiable membership of baptized believers in Jesus Christ.
3. A church practices the baptism of believers only by immersing them in water.
4. A church observes the Lord's Supper on a regular basis.
5. Under the authority of the local church and its leadership, members may be assigned to carry out the ordinances.
6. A church submits to the inerrant word of God as the ultimate authority for all that it believes and does.
7. A church meets regularly for worship, prayer, the study of God's word, and fellowship. Members of the church minister to one another's needs, hold each other accountable, and exercise church discipline as needed. Members encourage one another and build each other up in holiness, maturity in Christ, and love.
8. A church embraces its responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission, both locally and globally, from the beginning of its existence as a church.
9. A church is autonomous and self-governing under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of His Word.
10. A church has identifiable leaders, who are scrutinized and set apart according to the qualifications set forth in

Scripture. A church recognizes two Biblical offices of church leadership: pastors/elders/overseers and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

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Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*

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NOTES

1. Clyde Meador. "Church Definition and Guidelines" (an unpublished working document of the International Mission Board, originally cited on a website that has since been removed), Richmond, Virginia, May 10, 2005. (This document can be seen in its entirety in Appendix 1 of this article.)

2. Linda Kulman, "Young and Hungry," U.S. News & World Report (May 9, 2005): 70

3. Ibid.

4. 4. Merriam-Webster Online. "Protean"; available from http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/Protean; Internet; accessed 3 August 2007.

5. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. "protean."

6. *Roget's II: The New Thesaurus, 3d ed.*, s.v. "protean."

7. Homer, *Odyssey* 4.365

8. This same island much later became the site of the lighthouse of Alexandria, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World; available at http://ce.eng.usf.edu/pharos/wonders/pharos.html; Internet; accessed 3 August 2007.

9. Homer, *Odyssey* 4.365

10. Nonnus, Dionysiaca 1.14

11. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.731

12. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana.* 1.4

13. Robert J. Lifton, *The Protean Self*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 9. (Emphasis mine)

14. George Barna, *Revolution*. (Chicago: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 123-124.

15. My missiologist friend, Linda Bergquist, in our dialogue to attempt to grasp the meaning of this shift introduced me to the metaphor of the "Egg Yolk Jelly (Phacellophora camtschatica)" The Egg Yolk Jelly

is a large species of jellyfish that is identifiable by its yolk yellow center surrounded by hundreds of tentacles clustered around the margin. It resembles a large bird egg cracked open and poured into the water. It moves through the water with gentle pulsing, fluidly responding to its changing environment. It has a stable center with a fluid periphery.

Monterrey Bay Aquarium: Online Field Guide, "Egg Yolk Jelly"; available from http://www.mbayaq.org/efc/living%5Fspecies/ print.asp?inhab=444; Internet; accessed 3 August 2007.

16. For the purposes of this presentation, the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 is seen more as a particular example rather than a general example. For example, there is a section in the BFM 2000 on "Education" that would not be seen by many as foundational to salvation faith, and not spoken of directly in scripture.

17. Barna, *Revolution*, 111.

18. Barna, *Revolution*, 117.

19. Leonard I. Sweet, *AquaChurch: Essential Leadership Arts for Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture.* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing), 1999.

20. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "fluid."

21. John 4:14, NASB

22. Matthew 18:20, NASB.

23. Hebrews 10:25, NLT.

24. Jim Slack, "Understanding the Urgency," presentation as part of the Summer State Leadership Meeting of the North American Mission Board, Atlanta, GA, 31 July 2007.

25. Barna, *Revolution*, 124.

Book Reviews

Biblical Church Growth:
How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church

Reviewed by Darryl Thompson

McIntosh, Gary L. Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003. 191 pp. $14.99.

The book is a response to common misunderstandings which have developed concerning church growth. The author seeks to show that church growth teaching is not just a 'numbers game' or a 'marketing methodology' to get people into church. Rather he explains how it is a purposeful process based on biblical principles aimed at winning people to Christ, assimilating them into local churches, and equipping them for ministry.

The book is dedicated to Donald McGavran, the father of the church growth movement. His ideas have largely shaped the principles presented in the book. Quotes and a prayer by McGavran are included in each chapter and give insight into McGavran's views and passions.

McIntosh is highly qualified to write this book. He is a nationally known author, speaker, consultant, and professor of Christian Ministry and Leadership at Talbot School of Theology who has been actively involved in the church growth movement from its early years. He is president of the McIntosh Church Growth Network, a consulting firm he founded in 1989. He has served more than 500 churches in 55 denominations throughout the United States and Canada.

The book begins with a personal story of a time when McIntosh was a young pastor of a struggling church. His search for answers to the church's challenges eventually led him to an understanding of the church growth principles which he shares in the book. He believes that these principles are biblically based and provide the answers on how to grow a faithful church.

In chapter two he explains why he believes a church should grow. His foundational reason is the nature of God. God, by His very nature, is life-giving. This is displayed in God's creative acts and in His promise of a redeemer after Adam and Eve sinned. It is further evidenced by the life-giving ministry and message of Jesus and by the church which Jesus said He would build. The local church is to be a channel of Christ's life experienced in both spiritual births and spiritual growth.

The first principle which he presents is the starting point for all of the principles. It is having the right premise which he identifies as the Word of God. "Simply stated, life-giving churches have a strong commitment to the authority of God's Word" (37). God is the source of all authority and the Bible is the complete expression of His revelation to mankind. "Churches that have a high commitment to the authority of God's Word and passionately communicate their beliefs to those outside the faith have great potential for biblical church growth ... (47).

His second principle is titled the 'right priority'. He offers the ultimate goal that a church should have as "bringing glory to the life-giving God" (51). He demonstrates that giving glory to God is a main theme throughout the Bible with passages such as Isaiah 48:10-11, I Chronicles 16:28-29, Revelation 4:11 along with Jesus' words in John 12:27-28, 13:31, and 17:1 & 4-5. A primary way to bring God glory is for Jesus' disciples to bear fruit. He makes a good case that the fruit which Jesus refers to in John 15 is new converts or disciples.

The third principle is the right process which he identifies as discipleship. Churches do this by finding the lost, folding them into the body, and building them up in the faith (68). He sees Matthew 28:16-20 as the most complete account of Christ's commission to make disciples.

He advocates that church growth should come primarily through evangelizing the lost. He displays great insight in discussing how an overemphasis on spiritual renewal in a church can actually make it sick instead of healthy. This happens as a church becomes self-centered and loses its sense of mission.

The fourth principle is the right power which he presents as the Holy Spirit. Churches which follow Biblical principles will rely on the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit for the growth of the church and not human effort. He does not advocate that churches ignore proper techniques, methods, and strategies but that they carry out all of their activities in total dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit. This is seen in how churches place prayer at the forefront of their ministry.

The fifth principle is the right pastor. McIntosh says that

"life-giving churches are led by pastors who faithfully serve as God's fellow workers in fulfilling the Great Commission" (96). David is presented as an example of a servant-leader who shepherded with character and competence. The right pastor is a faithful shepherd who is concerned about biblical church growth.

The sixth principle is the right people. The right people are growing spiritually and willing to invest their lives in life-giving ministry. McIntosh states that "numerical growth in a church will not last unless the people reached also grow spiritually" (109). He identifies three categories of people (consumers, internal volunteers, and external volunteers) in a church. The ratio that a church has of these will greatly affect its growth potential.

The seventh principle is the right philosophy which is identified as cultural relevance. The principle is stated as "life giving churches relate to their communities in culturally relevant ways" (123). Paul is presented as an example of what it means to adjust one's style to the culture in which he is ministering in order to reach people. Although he was a Jew he willingly did what was necessary to gain a hearing from Gentiles. His methods could change but his unchanging message was Christ.

The eighth principle is the right plan which he states as "life-giving churches focus their ministries on clearly defined groups of responsive people" (137). He presents five questions which a church needs to ask and answer to help it identify its target group and experience biblical church growth. A local church must seek to learn the culture of the people it is trying to reach just as a missionary would.

The ninth principle is the right procedure which is a simple structure. He advocates that "life-giving churches employ simple organizational systems" (153). He notes that very few specifics are given for church structure in the New Testament. Four principles for church structure are identified: 1) as a church grows, certain persons need to be placed in charge of specific ministries, 2) every believer is responsible for and capable of relating directly to God, 3) each believer is gifted to serve the entire body, and 4) order is vital to the continued health of a church (153154). Two conclusions from the Bible and church history are presented concerning church structure. First, the life-giving Spirit is more concerned about function than form (154). Second, the life-giving Spirit is earnestly concerned with reaching every tribe, nation, people, and family (155). This chapter also includes some very helpful church life-cycle insights.

The book closes with a chapter titled, "Mix It Right." Like a great tasting pie, biblical church growth results when the right

ingredients are properly blended to create a dynamic synergy (165). Here he summarizes the nine principles which have been presented and closes with a challenge to the reader to cooperate with God to build a faithful church. For biblical church growth is the heart and passion of the life-giving God.

The field of church growth has had its share of criticism, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation. McIntosh makes a gracious, biblical response in this book. He leaves no room for confusion. Church growth as understood and advocated by Donald McGavran and the author is all about fulfilling Christ's commission to His followers. It is based solidly upon biblical principles. It does utilize the wisdom gained from studying what works and what does not work. But it is not simply aimed at increasing church numbers.

Many will struggle with the contents of this book. Not because it is not biblical but because it will measure success in ministry by reaching prechristians with the gospel message and bringing them into responsible involvements in the local church. Few churches are doing this well. It is difficult and challenging. Yet to do anything else is to play at church and fail to be about the great task Christ entrusted to His church.

I would recommend this book to pastors wanting to understand how to grow a church by reaching unchurched people, to church leaders wanting to understand why some churches grow and others don't, and to anyone wanting to better understand biblical church growth. This book is essential to properly understand the ideas and motivations of the church growth field founders.

<div align="center">Reviewer</div>

Thompson, Darryl: Address: Liberty Evangelical Free Church, 506 14th St. West, Williston, ND 58801. Title: Senior Pastor. Pastor Thompson received a B.S. degree in Business Administration from the University of North Dakota (1971), a Th.M. in Pastoral Ministry from Dallas Theological Seminary (1978) and is presently a D.Min. student at Talbot School of Theology.

Hit the Bullseye: How Denominations Can Aim the Congregation at the Mission Field.

Reviewed by Randy M. Keeley

Borden, Paul D. Hit the Bullseye: How Denominations Can Aim the Congregation At the Mission Field. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003. 144 pp. $17.50.

In a day when many churches across America are closing their doors, one group of churches decided that just surviving is not enough. Success would not be defined by survival but by growing in average worship attendance by five percent from one year to the next. *Hit the Bullseye* is the exciting story of the turn-around of the American Baptist Churches of the West. In a six-year period they went from just sixteen percent of their churches experiencing growth to seventy-two percent of their churches growing by five percent each year.

Paul Borden is currently the Executive Minister of Growing Healthy Churches (formerly American Baptist Churches of the West), in San Ramon, CA, serving 215 churches in Northern California and Northern Nevada. Prior to this position he served as their Church Growth Consultant. His career as a church consultant includes directing the Teaching Church Network in Minneapolis, MN and serving as the Director of Church Consulting for the Evangelical Free Church of America. Borden has also trained many pastors through his positions at Denver Seminary (Director of the Doctor of Ministry program, Associate Professor of Homiletics (tenured), Director and Host, Expositapes, Executive Vice President and Academic Dean) and at Western Bible College (now Colorado Christian University). He served as a co pastor at Bear Valley Church in Denver, CO and as the pastor of the Bible Baptist Church, Trenton, NJ. He has a Ph.D. from the University of Denver, a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary,

and a B.S. from Philadelphia College of Bible.

Many churches in America have not only missed the mark, they are aiming at the wrong target altogether. This is not only true for the local churches but their denominations as well. The goal for many churches and denominations is to keep the institution and all of its programs going. Rather than being institutionally driven, the right target is to focus on the mission given to the church by Christ. Borden states: "Local congregations exist to fulfill the 'Great Commission," while regions [middle judicatories or regional associations of denominations] exist to do three things: Regions exist primarily as catalysts for congregational 1) reproduction and 2) transformation while 3) helping local congregations direct mission dollars…. We believe that our region should exist to resource, broker for, and network local congregations" (31).

The bull's-eye in the target of the middle judicatory is the local congregation. The regional association exists to serve the church, not the other way around. The bull's-eye in the target of the local church is the unreached peoples in the community. In *Hit the Bullseye*, Borden shares the principles and the changes made to bring about this transformation in the churches he serves.

This transformation was brought about first of all by changing the expectations of the churches and leaders, and by holding regional staff, pastors, and churches accountable for the growth of their churches.

A second key factor in bringing about change is leadership at both the judicatory level and at the local church. Leadership is not presiding over business as usual but leading with mission, vision, values, and effective structures. "Leadership has at least one simple test: Is anyone following or not" (57)?

The third factor for change was the revitalization of the region one church at a time by conducting congregational consultations.

Discovering and developing effective pastors to lead churches in turnaround ministries is the fourth factor for change. "The vitality of the congregation is related to the quality of leadership provided by the pastor of the congregation. For us to create an environment of health and growth we knew we needed to raise the quality of leadership among the majority of our current pastors. However, we also believed that such an environment required us to recruit to the region pastors who were proven leaders" (105).

The final key for transformation was implementing effective structures that are consistent with the new mission, vision, and

values of the church and the middle judicatory. The importance of this step is highlighted by Borden: "The creation of new structures will never produce renewal in an organization. Renewal is instigated with a new mission, a compelling vision, and the adoption of new values. However, the change process is never ultimately achieved or solidified without the adoption of a new structure" (125).

The tremendous value I find in this book is the hope that it offers to established churches and denominations made up of regular people. We have many wonderful stories of new churches with superstar leaders that burst on the scene with amazing impact for the kingdom. But is it possible for the existing church whose best days are thought to be behind them to see things turn around? Paul Borden doesn't venture a guess or answer with a hypothetical yes, he relates to us how the Lord did it just a couple of years ago. This was Borden's goal. He writes: "This book offers hope to judicatories and the congregations that comprise them. It suggests the means of transformation and growth for judicatories and congregations…. If denominations have any hope for the future, it may appear as individual congregations, and in turn middle judicatories, are energized for mission. In this book I intend to offer principles, strategies, and tactics that enable our judicatories to move from a desire to survive to the evidence of hope, through transformation and growth" (13). These principles, strategies, and tactics are illustrated by concrete examples of what happened in Borden's region through a section in each chapter called "a piece of our story."

Although this is the story of the transformation of a regional association in the American Baptist denomination, the author takes care to demonstrate that many of these principles are relative to other denominations. He writes: "While recognizing various polities involved in different denominational entities, which affect the way judicatories conduct their ministries, I believe the problems they encounter today are common ones that relate more to leadership and changing ministry paradigms" (13).

The author also attempts to alert the reader to his underlying assumptions and biases. He writes: "As a context for the principles and strategies in this book, we make one basic assumption…. We assume that people leading middle judicatories must believe that the local congregation is the basic unit of mission in the world" (14). This basic assumption is repeated throughout the text and is key to his paradigm as seen in another stated bias. "My bias is that denominations will not be reformed from the top. Renewal works its way up from the so-called 'organiza-

tional bottom.' In fact that which is perceived as the "bottom," the local congregation, must again become the entity that is the focus that drives the denomination (27).

The strength of the book is the hope and practical help it provides for those who have wrestled with the concerns of a church or denomination stuck in the status quo. The principles and strategies presented worked in churches and communities that will remind us of our own. Tough issues of leadership, accountability, change, structures, power, and growth are hit head on. Borden's no-nonsense-approach makes one realize that the solutions he offers are not easy answers or a quick fix. But those who were baptized and added to the church make it all worthwhile.

Although the principles and strategies presented in the book will be helpful to both churches and middle judicatories alike, they are not systematically presented in a comprehensive way. This is due in part to how the book goes back and forth in dealing with issues as it relates to the middle judicatory and the local church. It is also due in part to the repetition of the themes throughout the book with some new information added along the way. For example the issue of how pastors lead is addressed in chapter one – a leader not a chaplain (20-23); chapter two – a missionary in a pagan culture (38-39) and the key to congregational transformation (50-51); and all of chapter 5 is devoted to pastoral leadership. In fairness to the author, the book is written primarily to middle judicatories; however pastors and church leaders can also apply many of the principle to their churches themselves.

This book was a great encouragement to me as a leader of an association of churches. Although I am wrestling with how to implement some of the principles in our own unique setting, it has helped to focus my attention on the area of providing leadership training for our pastors and church leaders and to empower them to become agents of change and transformation in their churches. It has also emboldened me to continue my role as a consultant to churches with the hope of being a catalyst for their transformation and hope. I have shared this book with my regional board and it has not only stimulated great discussion but has begun to shape the way we are looking at the future.

I encourage church leaders, pastors, seminary students, church consultants, and especially denominational leaders to study this book. It will challenge your thoughts, stimulate some insights, and fill you with hope knowing that Christ is still building His church (Matthew 16:18). May many more of us decide that just surviving is not enough.

Reviewer

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The Celtic Way of Evangelism

Reviewed by Jeffrey Mansell

Hunter, George G. The Celtic Way of Evangelism. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2000. 121 pages. $13.00.

The Celtic Way of Evangelism is an examination of the spread of Christianity into what is now known as the British Isles and Western Europe in the fifth to seventh centuries. This movement was largely spawned by the ministry of St. Patrick who was a bishop in the Roman Catholic Church. The unique style of ministry employed by St. Patrick contrasted sharply with extant methodologies being used by his contemporaries but proved vital in bringing vast numbers of "barbarians" to faith in Christ and birthing a missional movement that spanned several centuries. Hunter draws important parallels between effective historical methods and strategies needed to reach today's neo-barbarians.

The Celtic Way of Evangelism was written by George G. Hunter III, Ph.D. Hunter is the Dean of the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism, and Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth at Asbury Theological Seminary. Hunter holds degrees from Florida State University, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Princeton University and a Ph.D. from Northwestern University where he majored in Communication Theory. Hunter has authored ten books including *Church for the Unchurched* and *How To Reach Secular People.* He is a sought after-seminar speaker on the topic of church growth and is considered a leader in that movement.

Beginning with his plunge into slavery to a Druid tribal chief in Ireland, Hunter re-tells the story of St. Patrick's ministry among the Celtic people and the influence his life had on several generations of missionaries that would follow him. St. Patrick

escaped from his enslavement but at the age of 48 returned to the land of his captors as a Roman Catholic bishop with a ministry team and the gospel message. Ministering with an insider's advantage he was able to contextualize the message in such a way that vast numbers of persons came to faith.

A major thesis throughout the book is the contrasting approach to ministry that existed between Patrick and the Roman Catholic Church. Hunter develops this Celtic approach in great detail, exposing its effectiveness achieved through monastic communities, the ministry of conversation, ministering to the "middle-level" of life, and other devices. The Roman Church was largely critical of this new approach. An unyielding air of superiority emanated from Rome and eventually succeeded in forcing the priests to submit to the "Roman way."

Hunter contends that significant parallels exist between the Celtic world and contemporary society. Based upon his assessment that current culture is now post-modern he believes that many of the methods and the philosophy that guided Patrick and his people should be re-visited by today's church. A process approach to conversion, engaging persons in the ministry of conversation, paying the price to understand the culture in order to make the message indigenous, a renewed sensitivity to the natural world and an emphasis on the immanence of God are elements of Patrick's ministry that Hunter believes has application today. He contends, however, reminiscent of Patrick's day, that the religious hierarchy continues its efforts to suppress ministry that it does not consider consistent with its heritage. He illustrates this by drawing attention to the ecclesiastical debate that is underway in Africa (46).

The final section of the book provides specific examples of churches that are ministering (sometimes unknowingly) in the Celtic tradition. There is also a strong case made for the church to more fully invest itself in ministry to addicts and in the recovery movement. He closes by calling the church to reach the "New Barbarians who are all around us" (121) because of his contention that this is a population group that is demonstrating receptivity to the gospel.

If Hunter's contention that post-modernity mirrors Celtic culture is true, and it appears that many parallels do exist, then his book is a valuable resource for church leaders seeking to understand their community and who are searching for effective methods to communicate the gospel. Hunter demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the historical narrative of the Celtic Christian movement and deftly makes application to the current state of ecclesiastical affairs in North America as it relates to its in-

volvement in Great Commission ministry. His instructions and admonition are to be commended to the Church.

Hunter delves into the historic Christian mission debate which asks, "Should the missionary concentrate on Christianizing or Civilizing (15) the barbarians?" He indicates this debate is crucial because it goes to the heart of Patrick's philosophy of indigenization. Patrick's success lay in the fact that he understood the Celtic people and their culture. Patrick concentrated on "Christianizing" the Celts without dismantling their "civilization." Hunter correctly contends that "When you understand the people, you will often know what to say and do and how. When the people know that the Christians understand them, they infer that maybe the High God understands them, too. (20)" For this purpose Patrick's priests wore their hair in styles similar to Celtic priests and they made use of their existing celebration days and ceremonies (93). Contextualization of the gospel message through use of the people's language, music and stories, Hunter would say, continues to be essential in the fine art of persuasion among a foreign population (80).

Hunter's development of the issue of communication is an important contribution. His doctoral work in communication theory lends special credibility to this discussion. He writes that Aristotle believed that persuasion comes from the interplay between the speaker, the message, and the audience within the cultural context (57). Contemporary communicators would benefit from reading Hunter's expanded discussion of Aristotle's treatment of logos, ethos and pathos. I found this section personally beneficial in reinforcing the truth that an audience's adoption of a message is influenced by their perception of the character of the speaker. Adoption is further enhanced through the use of the common vernacular as evidenced by St. Patrick's use of the Celtic language and idioms familiar to them.

Hunter is driven in his writing by his strong bias toward evangelism. His passion for secular people provides an incentive to call the church, an organization he considers to be laggards in reaching the unsaved masses, to renewed activity in its obedience to the Great Commission. He stresses the importance of Patrick's pattern of communicating the possibility of hope (62) yet expresses pessimism regarding his belief that the church, en mass, can break from its lethargy and its top-down suppression of those isolated churches that do demonstrate strong evangelistic ministries.

While true to a point, I feel that Hunter's disgust for church hierarchy that seeks to bring local ministries into conformity with national policy is overstated. His disgust is especially tar-

geted towards those denominations he labels as, "Born in Europe." He strongly feels that executives in these denominations have erroneously kept local churches chained to historic methods that are no longer relevant. He has a valid argument.

However, having once been a denominational executive he should have some empathy for that group of leaders that are charged with maintaining the integrity of the body from the well-intentioned but wrong-headed. None should knowingly suppress the obvious workings of the Holy Spirit as he moves in a fresh way across the church. Unfortunately, the ability to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit is not always 20/20 which leads denominational executives to generally error to the side of caution.

The ability to make the past speak so clearly to the present is a great accomplishment in this book. While not every concept will translate clearly to the 21st century, such as the idea of monastic communities which were towns for believers and seekers, the principles embodied in the concept have application. Especially salient is his discussion of the Celtic understanding that coming to faith is a process that is worked out over time. Included in that process is the important ministry of conversation and explanation. Further, is the opportunity afforded the seeker to live among the members of the community of faith and to participate in the life of the community before making a commitment. This has excellent application for current ministry to the multitude of persons who have no Christian memory and very limited understanding of the Christian faith. The demand for an immediate response from these individuals to an initial presentation of the gospel is absurd. The opportunity, however, to experience the faith before committing to the faith makes great sense.

Hunter indicates that pressure from Rome eventually succeeded in forcing priests in the line of St. Patrick to adopt and even embrace Roman ecclesiology. His treatment of these priests is, in my opinion, too gracious. The obvious superiority of the Celtic method over Rome's should have motivated these priests to take a more determined stand. What contributed to their acquiescing to Rome's dictate? Was the transmission of values from generation to generation inadequate? Had their been a cultural shift that validated the Roman way in the minds of these later priests? Unfortunately Hunter does not develop this lapse in any great detail.

Hunter masterfully pulls from history an approach to missional ministry that is ripe for today's post-modern society. Ministers and lay persons have much to gain by a careful study of

his research into a movement that impacted a continent for Christ. The principle of paying the price to understand the language and culture of the intended audience practiced by St. Patrick is essential in any age to the successful communication of the gospel message and the winning of the masses to Christ.

Reviewer

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The Next Generation Leader

Reviewed by Dirke Johnson

Stanley, Andy The Next Generation Leader. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003. 165 pp.

The Next Generation Leader is written with the objective to equip present and emerging Christian leaders to positively shape the future as they advance God's kingdom work on earth. The author, Andy Stanley, is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and the pastor of North Point Community Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Married with two sons and a daughter at the time of writing, it is his desire that the reader would learn what it takes to lead with courage and then follow with character.

Stanley emphasizes five leadership essentials for those who are presently leading or are aspiring leaders. He draws from his experience as a successful pastor of the growing and vibrant North Point Community Church, and his observations and involvement with his father, Charles Stanley's well-known and lengthy legacy of effective leadership.

The book is divided into five sections of three chapters each highlighting the five essentials of leadership: Competence, Courage, Clarity, Coaching and Character. Each section concludes with a summary highlighting the principles taught in the preceding chapters and five questions for the reader to ask themselves.

The first essential of Competence highlights the importance of understanding one's limitations and finding a work environment where one can focus their energies on the few things that they do well. Stanley warns the reader not to allow one's time to get eaten up with responsibilities or projects that fall outside of their core competencies. He encourages the reader to delegate responsibilities that they are weak in so their weaknesses are an

opportunity for others (45).

Courage is the second essential. Stanley uses the David and Goliath story to illustrate that a key leadership quality is not just to know what to do, but to have the courage to do it in the face of failure or high risk. He says, "don't let the 'how' get in the way of pursuing 'what.'" (76). Leaders seize opportunities.

Clarity is the third essential. Stanley distinguishes the difference between clarity and certainty. Leaders are often not certain if the new direction is the right direction, but they must be clear on what that direction needs to be if they hope for others to have confidence to follow them. He then balances the need for clarity with the caution that one must not pretend. Truth is their friend and advice from others is not a weakness but a sign of security in oneself. Along with no pretense is the need for flexibility. Stanley says, "Pencil in your plans. Etch the vision in stone." (99).

The fourth essential is Coaching. No leader has all the gifts or all the abilities necessary for their vision to be fulfilled by themselves. An effective leader realizes they need others who will be better at certain things than they are. A good leader understands the importance of coaching his team and of having a coach for himself (128).

The last essential is Character. Stanley points out that one can be a leader without character, but they will never be a leader worth following. Our co-workers and those who report to us "will judge you not so much for where you led them, but how you led them" (133). Stanley shares that the more successful a leader, the greater the stakes will become in the character realm. He emphasizes that our "character shapes the experience of those who choose to journey with you" (159).

Stanley gives a persuasive argument for the five essentials to effective leadership. He does not suggest that his list is exhaustive but does seem to cover the critical areas of leadership. In my opinion he accomplishes his objective of motivating a leader to excel still more while encouraging one to examine their current leadership style in order to improve. Freedom to receive advise, counsel and to open oneself up to constructive feedback while engaging a personal coach is made to sound appealing. Such behavior is often missing with many who are in spiritual leadership positions today.

Stanley has several factors going for him in the writing of this book. His pedigree has given him instant ethos, especially when you factor in that he is a pastor of a large and growing church that seems on the cutting edge of ministry. He salts each of his points with stories of current experiences as a pastor or as a minister in his father's church. And he quotes John Maxwell

often. In fact, his leadership principles and writing seem very similar to Maxwell's. Without question he has been influenced by him.

Although the book is written to appeal to leaders of all variety, even in secular settings, without doubt the book will speak stronger to someone in either a pastoral leadership role or someone who has a team that reports to them in some type of mission setting. Because the vast majority of his illustrations were centered around a church setting it was hard to escape that applicative context. The book did not deal with theological doctrines but more practical insights regarding sociological and psychological principles in working with people. Even in using various biblical examples, they centered on human relationships of leading. I would not be surprised if the small church pastor who only has himself as a paid staff will struggle with some of what Stanley suggests since they lack the arsenal of resources to draw upon that seem so readily handy for a pastor in Stanley's position.

I believe the strength of the book is the three essentials. I love his distinguishing between certainty and clarity while encouraging the seeking of counsel from others so that one grows into certainty (95). The essential on "coaching" is excellent as it compares the athletic world and points out how every athlete has a coach, no matter how great they are. Often the coach is not as good as the athlete at the sport they coach, but they are excellent at observation and instruction and therefore the athlete improves. Stanley contrasts a coach with counseling, consulting and mentoring. The distinguishing characteristic is that a coach constantly watches. Their input relates only to what they have observed whereas a mentor may share their wisdom on a particular topic. A coach would include elements of a mentor and more (108). And the fifth essential of "character" emphasizes the inner spiritual condition of a leader. He uses the example of the three Jewish boys held captive by the King of Babylon as ones who demonstrated character by doing what is right, even when it is hard (143). He did a great job of emphasizing that our legacy will be remembered more by how we lead than what we do.

His first two essentials were good, but I felt lacked in different ways. The first one on competence can actually mess people up who do not properly apply it to their situation. His primary point is focus. Concentrate on those things you are good at and delegate to others the things you aren't good at. I would agree. However, he did not balance out such advice from preventing two misapplications. The first is recognizing that those entering ministry or the work world in general will benefit by having

numerous types of work experiences. A person in their early to mid twenties does not really know all of what they are really good at. As a Human Resource director I have many examples of distorted views of people's personal skills assessment. My second concern is that although there is wisdom that we should spend the bulk of our time in our strengths, there is wisdom to develop our weaknesses to a minimal level. Someone reading Stanley's first essential could easily walk away and feel that there are certain things that are beneath them because it does not fit into their gift mix. I have already encountered this thinking by a young intern right out of college after hearing John Maxwell say the same thing.

The second essential on Courage I felt was good, but he didn't connect it to any spiritual condition of listening to the Lord. He uses the example of David's courage to attack Goliath. Stanley says that "courage was his catalyst for leadership" (60). But where does his courage come from? This is never addressed and I think misses the entire point of this biblical narrative. David had courage and thus exhibited his natural leadership skill because he was acting on the promises of God and the past faithfulness of God in his life. Although he does a good job of emphasizing the need for a leader to seize opportunities, he fails to emphasize that unless a leader is in God's word and is hearing from the Lord, he may seize opportunities with great courage but wrong motivations.

But with those few points withstanding, I thought the book was excellent and has motivated me to look for a coach to speak into my life as a leader and I plan to use this book with a group of men that I co-work with. Anyone who is leading groups of people would benefit from the leadership principles that Andy Stanley lays out. His principles provide excellent discussion starters and the questions at the end of each section make it easy to lead in a group setting.

Reviewer

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Why Churches Die:
Diagnosing Lethal Poisons in the Body of Christ

Reviewed by Gordon Penfold

Brunson, Mac and Caner, Ergun, Why Churches Die— Diagnosing Lethal Poisons in the Body of Christ, Nashville, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005. 216 pp. $12.99

Mac Brunson and Ergun Caner offer an engaging view of church health by comparing the ailments that churches suffer to the ailments that afflict the body. "Practicing a science of spiritual forensics to prevent churches from death, they examine, diagnose and offer treatment for the cancer of gossip, the atrophy of shrunken faith, shortsighted vision, hardening of the heart, and more" (back cover). Their goal is to help churches and believers recognize the symptoms of spiritual disease so that churches might proactively respond to the threats before the diseases become deeply entrenched and cause the death of a church.

Mac Brunson has served four pastorates and is currently the senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. In addition Mac Brunson has served as the President of the Pastors' Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention. Ergun Caner has served in five different pastoral roles and currently serves on the staff of Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia. Between them they have more than 50 years of pastoral experience

Each chapter of the book begins with an illustration of the particular sin that besets congregations and confronts pastors. The illustrations are from real life and will strike a cord with those who have any familiarity with church leadership and church life. The writers then proceed to develop a portion of Scripture where the same issue is confronted. Finally they diagnose the problem and offer biblical solutions (in most cases) to

combat the stated problem.

Brunson and Caner develop the medical analogy between diseases (sin) in the church and diseases in the body. The book opens with the chapter title, "Toxins and Terminal Diseases in the Body of Christ." The subtitle reads "Extending the Right Fist of Fellowship—1 Corinthians 3:1-4." The book begins with this question and three responses:

- Have you ever stood in a church parking lot and listened to a story that ended with one of these sentences?
- "That church split over the color of the carpet!"
- "She walked right up to the pulpit and slapped the pastor!"
- "The deacons' meeting ended in an actual fist fight!" . . .
- Yelling, fighting, screaming. Taking sides against fellow believers. Doubting one another's salvation. Power plays, deception, and alliances that would rival any *Survivor* episode (7).

Why Churches Die begins with a close look at the first century churches in Ephesus and Corinth. The writers do a masterful job of synthesizing the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Corinthians with the Pastoral Epistles and Revelation. Most pastors and scholars recognize the dysfunction of the Corinthian Church, but Brunson and Caner also show the deep ailments of the Ephesian church. They masterfully draw in other pertinent portions of the Word that deal with these first century churches. This synthesis sheds great light on the deep problems that plagued both of these pioneer churches as well as the parallel problems churches face in the 21st century.

A sampling of the following chapter titles gives some insight into the genius of the book. Chapter 2 is entitled "Shrunken Faith and Coasting on the Past." This section compares lack of faith with physical atrophy. "Gossip and "Glossolitis: Swollen Tongues of Fire" details the devastating problem of the sins of the tongue (Chapter 3). Chapter 6 contains a discussion of "The Toxin of Bitterness: Poison of Jealousy and Vengeance." "Chapter 11 is entitled, "Anorexia and Bulimia: Eating Disorders of the Word of God" where they discuss the common problem of spiritual malnourishment in today's churches. The book consists of thirteen chapters with twelve of them containing a depiction of the "Holy Dozen," twelve of the "most debilitating diseases in the body of Christ" (5)

The stated the purpose of the book is as follows: "To identify the diseases that besiege local churches, excise the poisons, and bring church back to the biblical model . . . joyous and encouraging" (2). The "joyous and encouraging" model is the model of

practicing the "one anothers" in simple joy and harmony; the way the Lord designed His Body to operate (2-4). The authors do a good job of diagnosing the "diseases" of the church. They also do a commendable job in drawing parallels between the sins of the church and the maladies the beset our earthly bodies. However, in a few instances it seems that the authors force the medical analogy to suit their purposes. For example, it seems that a different model could be used to describe the Pharisees in Chapter 7. The authors describe the Pharisees with the term "Gluttony: Always Full: Ever Empty." It seems that the term "malnutrition" might better describe the Pharisees. The writers' description of gluttony to me implies someone who is overweight and whose eating is out of control. The Pharisees appear to be the opposite. They were spiritually self-satisfied when in reality they were starving because they had rejected the Bread of Life.

While the book is strong on diagnoses I feel it is weak on the prescriptions that will bring health. One of the reasons I purchased and read the book is that I work with deeply troubled and near-terminal churches in my ministry. I was hoping for some keen insights on bringing sick churches back to health and useful service. A few chapters do offer good insights on the "prescriptions" necessary for a return to health. For example, in Chapter 3 Brunson and Caner give the following biblically based recommendations for dealing with the problem of gossip. They offer three remedies necessary to contain and confront gossip.

1) Solomon does not seem hesitant in dealing with the slanderer. Proverbs 20:19 ends with the admonition, "Avoid someone with a big mouth" (Holman Christian Standard Bible).
2) Do not put a gossip in any position in the church (James 3:1-2).
3) If you do not confront the gossip with his sin in a loving but firm manner, God holds you responsible (61).

Chapter 5 is an example of a chapter that clearly delineates the issue of hardness of the heart, but does not offer any prescription for correction. It is entitled, "Arteriosclerosis: Harden Not Your Heart, Nabal and the Heart of Stone.". The opening illustration is about a man,

"Bobby Dean," who was hardened and constantly complaining in this life. "He had outlived his wife of by fifteen years, though some in their small community conjectured that she had died simply to get away from him" (79). As I read this chapter I thought, "Yes, I know people just like this." This is an apt description of some Christians. However, I was disappointed that

at the end of the chapter there was no prescription given to help transform a hardened heart. Churches surely have those who experience hardness of heart, but is there a remedy for them? If so, what is it and how may it be applied to their situation to help rescue them and their church from this destructive tendency?

Mac Brunson and Ergun Caner both come from Southern Baptist backgrounds and their language hints at this bent in ministry. However, this book applies to churches of any background. The causes of conflict detailed in this book are universal in nature. It is also obvious that the authors have a deep and abiding love for the Word of God and for the Lord's Church. This love is evident throughout the entire book. Each chapter discusses a problem in the church. They use the Scriptures to detail church problems and solutions so that the problems are not simply sociological or distinctly Southern Baptist. The issues and the responses are distinctly biblical. The writers are to be commended for their faithfulness to the Word of God.

I believe the strength of the book lies in its biblical foundation. Brunson and Caner use the Scriptures as the basis of their analysis of both the problems inherent in churches as well as the proposed solutions for each type of illness. Their exegesis of the text is impeccable and their applications of the truth are right on target (though they sometimes do not go far enough). The use of stories from their ministry experience draws the reader into the book to eagerly investigate the rest of each chapter. These illustrations that head each chapter are true to life. Church leaders will readily recognize these sinful traits and with little imagination could change the names to fit their own circumstances.

As mentioned above I believe perhaps the greatest weakness of the book is the failure to provide remedies for a number of the maladies that beset the church. As one who specializes in treating deeply diseased churches I was looking for more of the prescription aspect of saving troubled churches from extinction and renewing them to fruitful service. The title of the book *Why Churches Die—Diagnosing Lethal Poisons in the Body of Christ* names the real purpose of the book. The book does provide wonderful diagnoses to the sins that so easily beset us. However, the stated second purpose of the book "to excise the poisons and bring the church back to the biblical model . . ." seems to be wanting in a number of the chapters. However, every Christian worker will recognize the poisons and appreciate the candor and insight of this book.

One of the attributes of the book that helped me the most was the excellent treatment of the problems that plague the modern church. Brunson and Caner put biblical labels on many

of the "lethal poisons" that are robbing the church (and in some cases are killing the church) of spiritual power and vitality. This book will help me in the treatment of those churches who cry out for help and hope to regain a sense of life and joy before it's too late.

I found this book to be stimulating, encouraging and engaging. I believe it is a volume that should be read by pastors, church leaders and those who are contemplating fulltime Christian ministry. This book gives a fair, balanced and timeless treatment of the problem of unfettered sin among the saints. We may not yet understand all of the remedies at our disposal, but after reading this book the serious church servant can have the advantage of recognizing these diseases before they reach epidemic proportions in the local church. Perhaps another volume is due that specifically deals with God's cure for these spiritual maladies.

Reviewer

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