

THE EMERGING MISSIONAL CHURCHES OF THE WEST: FORM OR NORM FOR BAPTIST ECCLESIOLOGY?¹

DR. RODRICK DURST
PROFESSOR OF HISTORICAL THEOLOGY
GOLDEN GATE BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

TWO ASSUMPTIONS

First, my presentation will focus more on **the emerging churches** of the mission as opposed to **the mission of** today's churches. If missiology in any way begets ecclesiology, then it is valuable to look at the churches that our mission is begetting. My second assumption relates to the decision to state that mission in Baptist terms. I am using the simple church covenant out of which immersion of believers was recovered as the normative practice amongst what has come to be called Particular Baptists in England in the seventeenth century. Returning to England in 1609, Henry Jacob held many meetings with people known for their "Godliness and Learning." With these people, he weighed the consequences of following God's call to form a community of faith committed to following closely the ways of Christ according to the Scriptures. Finally, Jacob determined that, "I am 'willing to adventure' myself for this Kingdom for Christ's sake."² According to the Jessey Records, the group gathered by Jacob was equally convinced that they should covenant together as a church. They joined hands together and made a circle. Beginning with Jacob, they each made a profession of faith and repentance. Some people spoke longer and others were briefer. Then they covenanted together "to walk in all God's ways as he had made known or should make known to them."³ This believers covenant together to follow Jesus on adventures in obedience to the plain sense of the Scriptures no matter the trouble is the basic understanding of Baptist church used in this paper.

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²*The Records of the Ancient Congregation* [the Jessey Records]; *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, H. Leon McBeth, ed., 22. The document itself purports to be from a manuscript from Henry Jessup. William H. Brackney in his editorial remarks in *Baptist Life and Thought: A Source Book*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1998), 29, identifies this document as being from Benjamin Stinton, "A repository of Diverse Historical Matters relating to English Anti-pedobaptists, Collected from Original Papers or Faithful Extracts," 1712, an unpublished manuscript, Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford.

³*Ibid.*, 23.

By emerging churches, I mean to develop a Typology of the forms of Baptist ecclesiology, which have emerged and are now emerging in the western US and are seeking to affiliate with local Baptist associations and conventions through the credentials committees of those entities. I assert that congregational maturity can to some degree be measured by the capacity of a local gathered group of believers to self-identify as a church **and** to take the additional step of presenting itself as such to a recognized body of Baptist churches. I also am very interested in the capacity of Baptist ecclesiology, and the local interpretation of that ecclesiology and polity, to receive or reject new forms of church as vital or viral representations of the Baptist movement.⁴

DEFINITIONS

1. By **“missional church”** I mean the growing ethos and pathos amongst the emerging Baptist churches of the western US that their church is both *sent and sending*. This vision of the missional church is infused by the Johannine version of the Great Commission, “As the Father has sent me into the world, so send I you.” [John 20:21] These churches seek fulfillment of a context specific vision to live and speak the gospel to the peoples of that context. Equally, these churches often are open to missional restructure of staff and membership by sending out gospel mission teams and church planting teams, many with one-way tickets.⁵ This shift means that the leadership and membership of these churches have begun to think of mission not as a department of the church or even merely as something done. Rather these people think of mission more as who they are. They define themselves as mission. These churches seek to be what Reggie McNeal describes as the “church that only God can get credit for.”⁶ McNeal asserts that, “The first reformation was about freeing church. The new Reformation is about freeing God's people from the church (the institution)... [as] we turn members into missionaries.” In McNeal's inimitable style, he indicts the non-missional churches with, “We have failed to call people out to their true potential as God's priests *in the world*.” [Italics are McNeal's.]⁷ **As will be explored in the following research, this ruthless self-definition of missional is testing the capacity of Baptist ecclesiology and polity to be the missional vehicle for rapid multiplication of indigenous, self-governing, self-reproducing communities of faith.**

⁴See Durst's paper presented at the first conference, “To answer or not to answer: A Case Study on the Emergence of the Stone-Campbell Movement amongst the Baptist Churches of Kentucky in the 1820s.”

⁵See Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: a Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), and also David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991).

⁶Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future Church: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 23.

⁷Ibid., 43, 48ff.

In the significant book *The Missional Church* (1998), edited by Darrel Guder, the historical development of the understanding of the church moved according to South African missiologist David Bosch for the *place where* to *the people who*.⁸ “The church exists as a community, servant, and message of the reign of God in the midst of other kingdoms, communities, and powers that attempt to shape our understanding of reality.”⁹ Thinkers such as David Bosch, Leslie Newbigin and Vincent Donovan “... rather than seeing missiology as a study within theology, theology is actually a discipline within Christian mission. Theology is the church on a mission reflecting on its mission, its identity, and its meaning.” In a chapter entitled “Why I am missional,” emergent theologian Brian McLaren refines the purpose of the church as “To be and make disciples of Jesus Christ in authentic community for the good of the world.”¹⁰ McLaren seeks to be missional by obeying the “outward thrust of Christianity from me to my Neighbour to stranger to enemy to all tribes and nations of the earth.”¹¹ For the emerging missional churches of the west, the gospel is to be lived and spoken that people might receive and enter the kingdom and to still love and serve those who do not receive and enter. In other words the struggle is to think kingdom and not merely the church.

By “**emerging churches**,” I do not mean the “emerging church movement,” which is a phenomenon of the postmodern exploration of incorporation of the sensual and the so-called ancient-future into worship.¹² I do not here mean to be affirming or critical of that movement. By emerging, I mean the notion that there is a traceable, analyzable development amongst newer churches in the west that has significance for those wishing to be faithful to the movements of the Spirit called Baptists.

By “**Baptist ecclesiology**,” I mean both the little “b” Baptist in the sense of James McClendon's believers church operating out of the plain sense of the Scriptures and the classical Baptist litmus described by Mark Dever as where the gospel is rightly preached and taught, the ordinances of are rightly practiced, and mutual admonition is consistently practiced.¹³ It is striking that all three of these marks of the church are found among the

⁸Darrel Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 80; Brian McLaren in *A Generous Orthodoxy*, (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2004), 105, attributes the popularizing of the term *missional church* to the Guder book.

⁹McLaren, 110. In this chapter entitled “Missional Witness,” the church is seen as apostle to the world.

¹⁰Ibid., 107. McLaren recalls a mentors advocacy “to remember, in a pluralistic world , a religion is valued based on the benefits it brings to its nonadherents;” *ibid.*, 111.

¹¹Ibid., 105, 110.

¹²See “The Emergent Mystique,” *Christianity Today*, Nov. 2004, vol. 48, No. 11: 36ff.

twelve empirical indicators of the missional church listed by Eddie Gibbs in *ChurchNext*.¹⁴ With these preliminary clarifications, a Typology of the types of Baptist missional churches can be developed.

A TYPOLOGY OF EMERGING BAPTIST MISSIONAL CHURCHES

Many of us are indebted to the incipient Typology of early eighteenth century American Baptist churches as presented in the lectures and later text of Leon McBeth.¹⁵ His sociological dichotomy of emerging Baptist churches was named as the **Charleston (Regular Baptists)** and the **Sandy Creek (Separate Baptists) models**. While doctrine amongst the models was similarly Calvinistic with the Sandy Creek model shifting to a modified Calvinism which McBeth interpreted as enabling the Sandy Creek churches emphasis on evangelistic practices such as the public invitation to express ones faith. In Charleston churches worship had educated leadership as the norm and orderly services of worship as befitting to a more developed township population. The Sandy Creek churches emphasized the call to ministry over against trained competence and enjoyed ardor over order in their worship as befitted the early American frontier mindset.

I would suggest that emerging or at least thriving in the Western U.S. are two immigrant versions of these eastern models: a **Contemporary Charleston model** and a **High Tech Sandy Creek model**. Expository preaching would be welcome in both models' churches, although it would be vastly more prevalent in the High Tech Sandy Creek Model church, as would evangelistic public invitations. Both models exhibit significant traditional graded music and education programs, but the Contemporary Charleston model would reflect much more classical music in the Sunday morning services. Both models are heavily invested in traditional, Sunday morning Bible teaching programs meeting on church owned property. Typically, the top fifty California SBC churches who give to the Cooperative Missions Program, the High Tech Sandy Creek Churches outnumber the Contemporary Charleston churches about ten to one. As with its earlier eastern predecessor, order and contemplation would be more at home in the Contemporary Charleston orders of service and ardor and action in those of the High Tech Sandy Creek Model. The High Tech Sandy Creek churches favor evangelism as a core strategy, while the Contemporary Charleston tradition favors missions, particularly international missions, as core to their strategy.

Ralph Neighbour would categorize both of the above models of churches as **PBDs, "Program Based Design,"** as opposed to the cell-based or **People-Based Churches** for which he argues. By Program, Neighbour refers to the Bible Teaching, Music and Missions Education programs characteristic of the PBD churches, which programs necessarily require significant staff and funding to sustain. His critique of the PBD churches is that, "In every

¹³Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, (Wheaton, ILL.: Crossways, 2000), 9-10.

¹⁴Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*, (200): 52.

¹⁵H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 228-232.

case they [the staff] have a vertical vision of church life.”¹⁶ I would add the following perspective to that of Neighbour. Both of the above models or traditions are **FBDs, Facility Based Designs**. This design value is so prevalent in most western Baptist churches that it operates at the uncritical, assumption level. “We are not really a church until we have our own building.” Note that in church “plantologist” Ed Stetzer’s comprehensive and valuable *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (2003), he lists “secure the facilities” in the top nine steps for churches planting churches.¹⁷ This observation suggests that the Facility-Based Design will continue to be a significant design in use in the west.

Beyond these “Southern immigrant” models for Baptist churches, a third church model has emerged in the west with the starting of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Orange County in 1979. I am calling this model the **West Coast Model or the Seeker Sensitive/Purpose-Driven Church model**. Many of these churches were begun as church plants while others have sought to transition from the Charleston or Sandy Creek models to the West Coast model. This West Coast/Seeker Sensitive/ Purpose Driven Model” is **still largely a Facility Driven Model**. Its worship seeks to reflect the cultural preferences of its target groups. Saddlebacks worship services are characterized by the rock and roll sound preferred by most Southern California baby boomers and the fast growing Clovis Hills Community Church of Fresno reflects the more Country and Western preferences of the central California context.

The West Coast Model shifted its church structure toward an executive leadership-looking model, which meant that church decision-making meetings were limited to a quarterly or annual basis. The assumption was that minimal congregational polity required a congregational vote 1.) to call the pastor, who then had delegated to him authority to “hire and fire” staff, and 2.) to present annually an operations budget. The strategy presented in the Saddleback Church growth conferences advocates growing big by growing smaller, namely, the large worship celebrations are balanced with congregational involvement in small groups.¹⁸ Many of the emerging West Coast model churches are “elder led and staff run.” The most successful of the West Coast Model churches are what Thom Rainier identifies as **“high expectation churches,”** which apply a hierarchy of member covenants leading to greater spiritual responsibility.¹⁹ Topical sermons, rich in textual proofs, present how-to’s for spiritual formation as opposed to the predominant verse-by-verse expository preaching found in the Contemporary Charleston and High Tech Sandy Creek models.

¹⁶Neighbour, 49.

¹⁷Ed Stetzer, *Planting Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 325. Stetzer imparts some tested wisdom for this FBD church plants, “Ill-advised decisions can send wrong messages to the community if the sociological values reflected in the facility are out of step with the tastes of the community.” He cautions against high financial overheads and against the size of the space dictating the growth of the church; *Ibid*.

¹⁸Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

¹⁹Thomas Ranier, *High Expectations* (Nashville: Broadman, 1999).

These topical messages connect well with the boomer generation desire for application steps to every domain of life. Achievement and progress are high values in these churches and members.

The Canadian House Church leader, Rad Zdero, has cast a helpful distinction toward this developing Typology of emerging churches. Relative to the structures implemented by western churches for evangelism and discipleship multiplication **in small groups**, in *The Global House Church Movement* (2004), Zdero charts three models prevalent amongst churches today: **Traditional Church... WITH small groups**, **Cell Church... OF small groups**, and **House Churches... IS small groups**.²⁰ Zdero would likely characterize most West Coast model churches as traditional, vertically-focused in staff, facilities-based churches with small groups for fellowship, evangelism, ministry and discipleship. Before entering into examination of the emerging **Cell and House Church models** in the west, reference to the common trichotomy of church models characteristic of many contemporary church studies is helpful.

Larry Kreider in *House Church Networks* (2001) and Reggie McNeal in *The Present Future Church* (2003) identify three kinds of churches:

1. **Community Churches**, which Kreider likens to “Mom and Pop” stores.
2. **House Church Networks**, which is likened to a shopping mall.²¹
3. **Mega Churches**, which Kreider and McNeal liken to supercenters like Wal-Mart.²²

To this trichotomy, Kreider adds a comprehensive fourth model,

4. **The Regional Church**, which includes all three kinds of the above churches in a geographical area.²³

This notion of a *regional church* incorporating all types of churches in the region is similar to the church planting strategy developing in the Colorado Baptist Convention (SBC). The emerging strategy there is to link “stackpole” churches to churches that meet in houses. This approach appears intentionally more organic or pragmatically connectional than the

²⁰Rad Zdero, *The Global House Church Movement*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2004), 127.

²¹Kreider, 28.

²²McNeal, 22. According to McNeal, a new mega church starts every two days. The description of a mega church plant, the Fellowship of the Rockies in Pueblo, CO, in which 800 attended the first Easter, and two years later 2000 attended, is narrated in Curt Dodd, “Following God's Vision from a Mega Church to a Church Plant,” in *Reaching a Nation Through Church Planting*, compiled by Richard Harris (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2003), 36-37. This book presents multiple models of emerging churches from the microscopic view of the individuals often responsible for initiating that churches start. More of these case study collections are needed.

²³Kreider, 20-21, 35.

mere geographic framework developed by Kreider, although Kreider certainly hopes for a vital, shared strategy within the regions he describes.

Two additional church models are emerging in the west. These distinctive models emerge, when either a mega church (seating of 400-800) of the Charleston, Sandy Creek or West Coast variety is in significant decline due to adjacent community transition or when the church has become land-locked due to property costs. When the former happens, the declining church may invite new ethnic churches to start within their empty spaces. Such churches then move to become a **Multi-Cultures Campus Church**. The Multi-Cultures Campus Church may not attempt to become a blended **Multi-Cultural Church**, which is another emerging western model. Rather, a Multi-Cultures Campus Church has distinct homogeneous congregations operating as distinct churches within one facility under a stewardship agreement.²⁴ When the latter happens and expansion becomes impossible, a second church model is observed, that of the **Meta Church or Multi-Campus Church Model**. In this model, one church worships on multiple campuses or locations throughout a metropolis. In *Reaching a Nation Through Church Planting*, Rick Ferguson presents a narrative ecclesiology of the Meta Church Model that grew out of Riverside Baptist Church in Denver, CO.²⁵

Closely akin to the Meta Church Model is a newer **Rapid Multiplication Church** model. Paul Kim, founding pastor of Berkland Korean Baptist Church, Berkeley, California, calls this model the **Team Church Model**. This church has developed into a small church planting movement of now twenty-one churches in twenty years across the US and in Eurasia.²⁶ Members of a TEAM Church understand that the mission of the church is to start new churches and that the method is for members of the existing church to be relocated as a team to the new church start location. In 1991, a team of fourteen members of the Berkeley congregation including founding pastor Kim, relocated to Cambridge, Massachusetts, relocated to start Berkland Korean Baptist Church East. Kim asserts that the team is already a church, and carries out all of the basic functions of a church.²⁷ In 1992,

²⁴At a January 2004, training conference hosted by NAMB and GGBTS in San Francisco, Ray Bakke was asked, “Which is right, focusing on people groups or multi-cultural churches? Both/and was his the answer. Missiologist looks at the broader picture while evangelists are reapers using a laser approach in a responsive group. Very few people can conduct an orchestra or coach a pro team as there are very few pastors who can “pull off” a multi-cultural church. We need a variety of churches to meet the diverse needs of an urban populace. We as Southern Baptists need to understand and appreciate our niche and be willing to celebrate the strengths of other denominational groups.

²⁵See “Reaching Your City through Church Planting,” in *Reaching a Nation Through Church Planting*, 82-83. Ferguson credits the term **Meta Church** to Carl George in *Preparing Your Church for the Future*

²⁶Paul Kim, “Team Church Planting,” in *Reaching a Nation Through Church Planting*, 92.

²⁷Ibid.

John Worcester launched a Team Church in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolis at the invitation of the area Baptist association. TEAM Church meets on Sunday evenings so that its members can go out on Sunday mornings to satellite locations to start new churches. This TEAM church functions as a church when it exercises its ministry to start other churches.²⁸ The church documents and published strategy indicate that this model blends the Purpose-Driven Model of Rick Warren at Saddleback (West Coast Model) with principles derived internationally from missiological studies of church planting movements.²⁹ A church planting movement is defined as “a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment.”³⁰ These churches may eventually define themselves as the **Scattered Church Model**, in the sense that the Pentecost event of Acts two was the empowering of the believers in the community to scatter to the uttermost parts of the earth to present the gospel in the languages of the hearers even as each heard the praise of God in Christ at Pentecost in his or her own language. Thus the mindset of the Scattered Church is not to gather but to pour out the church and scatter it in apostolic witness. In this instance, while a Mega Church is within reach of some of these western churches, the intentional decision is to send out key teams of people and key amounts of funds in order to reach more people in more places.³¹

The **Multi-Cultural Church** model seeks to blend any number of resident cultural groups into a heterogeneous Baptist community. First Baptist Church of Vacaville, CA, has become a Mega Multi-Cultural Church following the call of Dr. Leroy Gainey, an African-American professor at Golden Gate Seminary, as its first non-Caucasian lead pastor. These churches appear to use a traditional approach to Baptist polity including a High Tech Sandy Creek approach to worship with graded Bible teaching and music programs meeting on Sundays in church owned property.

With the tremendously successful **Cell Church Model** of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, with its membership at 750,000, and promotion of the cell church movement through the In Touch Ministries of cell church movement of Baptist Ralph Neighbour, Jr., other Baptists began to explore and develop Baptist Cell Church Models, or as Neighbour prefers, People Based Design churches. Natural cell division and multiplication has been the most difficult problem to solve in churches seeking to apply this

²⁸Data found in a copyrighted CD, John Worcester, Church Planting Leadership Resources, 2003.

²⁹David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 259, 257-8. David Garrison has identified the ministry of Shubal and Martha Stearns through the 17th century North Carolina, Sandy Creek Church as a church planting movement. “Viewed through the lens of Modern day Church Planting Movements, it is easy to add the Sandy Creek tradition to the list.”

³⁰Ibid., 21.

³¹This “**Scattered Church Model**” is **not** what Edward Hammett has in mind in his book entitled *The Gathered and Scattered Church* (Atlanta: Smyth and Helwys, 1999).

model. Saddleback Valley Church could be categorized as a cell church with its heavy emphasis of involvement in small groups off church property and with its authorizing pastoral roles to leaders of those groups. However, Saddleback is best understood along Zdero's notion of a church *with small groups*, since the large worship services are so significant in the church's strategy, budget and staff.³² Strictly speaking the Cell Church Model is a church *of cell groups* who come together regularly for celebration services, but clearly the center of gravity for the Cell Church is in the cell. Most staff members in Cell Churches equip and oversee volunteer cell leaders.

The central book in this Cell Church Model movement is *Where Do We Go from Here?* and was written by Neighbour in 1990. The book is very practical but its ecclesiology is framed in a caustic criticism on traditional Building Based design of Baptist Churches. Wolfgang Simson is equally critical of the traditional Building Based Design. What Neighbour's book has done for the cell church model, Simson's book is doing for the **House Church Model**. In his book, Simson gives twelve reasons the house churches are preferable to the traditional church.³³ Among those twelve are “1.) Disciplined multiplication... 3.) Freedom from church growth barriers... 4.) Involvement of many more people more efficiently... 10.) It is more biblical... and 12.) It is undeniably cheaper.”³⁴ Rad Zdero defines the **House Church Model** as

fully functioning churches in themselves, with the freedom to partake of the Lord's Supper, to baptize, marry, bury, exercise discipline, and chart their own course. They are volunteer-led and meet in house-sized groups for participatory and interactive meetings involving prayer and worship, Bible study and discussion, mentoring and outreach, as well as food and fun. Because they are typically autonomous, they more easily adapt to persecution, growth and change, but are also more vulnerable to bad theology and behavior. So, house churches become part of peer networks for health and growth, like a spider web of interlocking strands.³⁵

According to Kreider, “Cell groups have opened the door for house churches to emerge.”³⁶ David Garrison makes the distinction between cell churches and house churches relative to their capacity to multiply rapidly, “while cell churches enjoy many of the initial qualities of church planting movements, they tend to reach a plateau owing to the internal controls associated with centralized leadership.”³⁷

³²Zdero, 127.

³³Wolfgang Simson, *Houses That Change the World: The Return of the House Churches* (Emmelsbull, Germany: C & P Publishing, 1999), 32-37.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Zdero, 4.

³⁶Kreider, 46.

In this developing Typology of emerging Baptist churches in the west, the House Church Model and the Cell Church Model have some distinct characteristics from the models identified above. Both models are non-Building Base Designs or put positively using Neighbour's construct, **House Churches and Cell Churches are People Based Designs**. Both models are critically dependent on volunteer leadership in pastor-like roles, with that being even more significant in the House Church Model. All of the other models are heavily dependent on paid, pastoral leadership. Sarcastically, someone has said that House Churches avoid the three biggest barriers to rapid multiplication of new churches and believers; buildings, budgets and "bigshots." The hope for orthodoxy and orthopraxy in the House Church Model is in the voluntary network of sister House Churches, somewhat like a Baptist association of churches. Some of the leaders of the House Church movement in Southern California are Neil Cole and Paul Kaak.

In a conference in San Francisco in January, 2004, Cole indicated that he preferred **Simple or Organic Church** to House Church for three reasons: 1.) a house is a building and the church is not a house; 2.) in some instances, a house is not the best option, and 3.) historically, the "house church" concept has been inwardly focused and not overtly committed to multiplication.³⁸ He went on to define church as "A group of believers gathered together regularly...That consider themselves a church...That have qualified leaders...That regularly practice the ordinances or sacraments...That have an agreed upon doctrinal base and evangelistic purpose." There are currently three house church networks amongst Baptists in the Rocky Mountain region. One of these has sought and received admission to a local Baptist association and one has thus far been refused.

REVIEW OF THE EMERGING TYPOLOGY

The result has identified eight models of emerging Baptist churches in the western states: 1) The Contemporary Charleston Model; 2) The High Tech Sandy Creek Model; 3) The West Coast or Seeker Sensitive/Purpose Driven Model; 4) The Multicultural Church Model; 5) The Multi-Cultures Campus Church Model; 6) The Meta and/or Team Church Model; 7) The Cell Church Model; and 8) The House Church Network Model (also called Simple and Organic Church Models). The first six models tend to be Program Based or Facility Based designs. They are heavily reliant upon paid pastoral staff to achieve those designs. Buildings, budgets, staff and baptisms are key entries on their ministry success scorecards. These churches tend to have significant endurance, low heterodoxy, and to serve as stackpole churches for the more experimental, short-lived models. Two of the models are People Based Design not limited by buildings or paid ministerial staff in the growth: the Cell Church and the House Church Network. There is no reason that the small group multiplication within the West Coast Model or the Sunday School class multiplication within the Contemporary Charleston, High Tech Sandy Creek, or Multicultural Church

³⁷Garrison, 271

³⁸This latter question has been asked of Robert and Julia Banks in their advocacy of the inward focused House Church model in *The Church Comes Home* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998).

models needs to be limited to church owned property provided that multiplication is encouraged by the pastoral staff through lay leaders and teachers. Four of the models have significant capacity to be Rapid Church Multiplication vehicles: the House Church Network, Cell Church, West Coast and Meta or Team church models. With these preliminary analyses stated, some questions begin to surface about what is normative or merely cultural/traditional relative to being Baptist in the various models.

1. In the U.S. context, it is uncritically assumed that to be a self-identifying church, that church must be sufficiently constituted to achieve IRS 501C-3 status as a non-profit religious corporation. Furthermore, it is also assumed that to be a church, it must have ordained, paid pastoral staff and have its own building, whether owned or rented. These assumptions have brought stability and viability to Baptist churches, associations and conventions. Clearly in other parts of the world, due to poverty, persecution and culture, Baptists churches exist and thrive without dependence on these assumptions. If these assumptions are not direct statements or implications of Scripture, what prices are Baptists paying to achieve these marks of incorporation? I do not recommend an alternative. I only want to receive this practice with careful thought and reflection, knowing that all practices need to be evaluated for their capacity to facilitate incarnating and communicating the gospel to the nations.
2. The Baptist missiologists and church strategists leading the Rapid Church Multiplication models described above have all explored the meaning of the so-called five-fold office of the church found in Ephesians 4:10-11. This exploration appears to challenge the traditional two-fold office of pastors and deacons found in Paul's letter to Timothy and stated in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. Neighbour, Zdero, Frost, Hirsch, and Kreider discuss the problem of the two-fold versus five-fold office for the church.³⁹ These authors suggest that the five-fold office was the model of the early church organization for world mission.⁴⁰ Kreider refers to this five-fold office of the church as “Fivefold **Translocal** Ministry” [bold is mine].⁴¹

³⁹Neighbor, 47; Zdero, 129; Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2003), 169; Kreider, 114.

⁴⁰“Reflecting on Ephesians 4:7,11, Frost and Hirsch observe that, “These verses seem to underscore the fact that the church's ministry is *fundamentally* charismatic by nature. This is important to recognize because it allows us to move away from the notion of APEPT [apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers] ministry as *office* to that of *function*. Jesus' gracing of his church cannot be institutionalized into office. Frost & Hirsch, 168. “Not necessarily in terms defined by the sociological phenomenon called the “charismatic movement,” but mainly in terms of its theological implications; ie. of God's enabling/empowering grace for ministry.” Frost & Hirsch, N. 4, 168. Note 5 on that same page indicates that apostolic here is meant to avoid the “unhelpful historic controversy” re. the uniqueness of the original apostolic twelve which of course can not and should not be replicated.

⁴¹Kreider, 114.

- Could the two-fold office apply be *in* the church and the three other offices (apostle, prophet and evangelist) be meta or tarns local, much like the current associational directors of missions function apostolically in strategy and encouragement of new churches? Baptist will want to integrate the plain sense of both these “office” passages in order to live out the plain sense of the scriptures. It maybe that we discover that this has actually been the Baptist practice but has not been named in this manner.
3. New Testament scholars have for some time debated whether a hierarchy of church offices can be found within the New Testament or whether it is an early church development. Related to this debate is whether church leadership within the New Testament was organized on the basis of charismatic, gifted leaders, or around official positions in which the church installed persons as their leaders. Benjamin Merkle has done a helpful study of this issue. He concludes that “the hierarchical structure of the early church” is a later addition and, even a corruption.”⁴² For Baptists, the tension between the recognition of giftedness for leadership and installation into leadership offices continues to need conversation in order to maintain a healthy and humble perspective of both.
 4. The problem of a full understanding of church unity, priesthood of the believers and pastoral authority also needs further conversation. Gerald Cowen's new book, *Who Rules the Church? Examining Congregational Leadership and Church Government* (2003), astutely addresses the Baptist doctrine of the priesthood of believers in the context of pastoral authority. His discussion emphasizes the historic precipitant for this Baptist doctrine, namely that in contradiction to traditional Catholic doctrine, “believers are qualified to come to God directly without aid of an intermediary”⁴³ Cowen goes on to state that the believers’ priesthood asserts the individual believer's shared responsibility for evangelism and discipleship of others. He does insist, perhaps over against what he sees as a Presbyterian intrusion, that “since [believers] are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit... which makes them capable of understanding God's Word... why should not every believer who is in right fellowship with God be able to have a voice in the business of the church?”⁴⁴ This understanding of the priesthood of the believers falls far short of the present discussion of member capacity from the very beginning to take leadership roles with reference to the mission of the church. Simson contrasts the minimization of the believers’

⁴²Benjamin L. Merkle, “Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church,” Vol. 57 in *Studies in Biblical Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 67-89, 89-90.

⁴³Gerald P. Cowen, *Who Rules the Church? Examining Congregational Leadership and Church Government* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 92.

⁴⁴Ibid., see also his discussion of the Presbyterian distinction between ruling and teaching elders, 81-82. See also the appended article appended to Cowen's work, “Ecclesiology Among Baptists in American and Great Britain (1609-Present)” by Stephen Scott. Scott sees an adoption of Presbyterian Polity into Baptist churches re: ruling and teaching elders to be a cause of some of what he calls “The Current Ecclesiological Confusion;” Ibid. 142-143.

priesthood in non-House Church models versus that of magnifying that priesthood in the House Church Network model.

HOW TO EMPOWER OTHERS

let them function
 believe in them
 delegate authority
 further God's plan for them
 invest in them
 love them and say so
 give them what you have
 discuss with them
 spend time freely with them
 give them the keys now
 serve them
 praise them
 transfer masterhood to them

HOW TO EXPLOIT OTHERS

give them functions
 make them believe in you
 require submission
 make them part of your plans
 use them
 love the task more than the people
 take what they have
 preach at them
 require appointments
 hold back until you retire
 let them serve you
 accept their praise graciously
 demonstrate masterhood to them⁴⁵

This the discussion of a magnified perspective of the priesthood of the believers will need to take place in connection with a discussion to the pastor-teacher role in the local church.

5. Finally, a discussion needs to take place concerning contextualization and the forms or models a Baptist church can implement in a given context. In *Perimeters of Light*, Elmer Towns and Ed Stetzer present a powerful target diagram of how people and churches can leave the center of “our best understanding of Scripture” and edge out of truth in sequential stages: “churches who misunderstand some of the issues but are still orthodox,” to “Unorthodox churches Christian can be found,” and then to “Heretical groups by doctrine and immorality.”⁴⁶ The authors seek a right biblical faithfulness between syncretism brought by compromise with the truth versus a traditionalism, which begets obscurantism. They call the church to high biblical content with high cultural content. The eight types of Baptist churches identified in the paper need to be analyzed for their relative capacity to deliver such high biblical and cultural contents. Then a correlation needs to be made between those contents and effectiveness in evangelism and member leadership development and deployment.

⁴⁵Simson, 208. “If the traditional model does not empower and disciple, what does it do?”

⁴⁶Elmer Towns and Ed Stetzer, *Perimeters of Light: Biblical Boundaries for the Emerging Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2004), 28, 35, and 52.

CONCLUSION

Having come this far in this study of the emerging Baptist churches of the west, I take delight in our future as Baptists. I am more convinced than ever that the Baptist way is excellent stewardship of the gospel of grace.