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abstract

The purpose of this article is to outline the Holiness Perspective on Church Growth. Some may be tempted to think of Church Growth and Holiness as mutually exclusive ideas. This article attempts to bring these concepts together. This is accomplished through biblical, theological, and historical foundations. The biblical foundation is based on the church of Antioch and the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth. The theological foundation focuses on three aspects: *missio Dei*, Incarnation, and kingdom of God. The historical foundations outline a number of church planting strategies used throughout the history of the church.

church growth: a holiness perspective

When I step back and look at my library I see two distinct elements. First, there is what I would call my discipleship and holiness texts. Many of these have a Wesleyan groundwork and are helpful in understanding what it means to be a follower of Christ or to be like Christ as the way and goal of the Christian life. Since becoming a church planter six years ago, there is another section in my

library that has grown. This portion focuses on church planting and emerging church issues. The emphasis here is more on missional church which I would quickly define as taking the church beyond its walls to engage and embrace its community and culture in order that it may be redeemed to the Lord.

In my very simple observations it seems pastors more and more are finding themselves in one of these two camps. There are those more emerging and missionally minded who appear to see our holiness tradition as a burden and obstacle to outreach. I also see concern on behalf of those more holiness focused for they fear there is a growing movement to forsake our holiness heritage which has been the foundation of the Wesleyan church for years. I am fending off the temptation to think of mission and holiness to be mutually exclusive ideas, but to instead work to bring them together for the benefit of both.

One thing I appreciate about John Wesley is his ability to bring these aspects of faith together; he was a man of holiness and mission. Here is a man who formed holy clubs (holiness) and rode 225,000 miles on horseback (mission). Mission spread holiness, holiness fueled mission.

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What about the Scriptures? Are there places where holiness and mission come together? The first and most obvious is Matthew 28:19 where Christ's command is "go" (mission) and "make disciples" (holiness). Another powerful illustration is in Isaiah 6. Here Isaiah sees the Lord high and lifted up. From this new vision of Christ, he is then aware of his unclean lips. Isaiah has a holy moment. He sees the Lord in a new way and his response is repentance. His mouth is then touched with coal and the seraph says "Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." (Isaiah 6:7) The voice of the Lord is then heard "Whom shall I send: And who will go for us?" Isaiah's response is "Here I am, send me." (Isaiah 6:8) The heart of Isaiah is to respond in obedience from his holy encounter with the Lord.

When I look at the history of the Wesleyan church I am most proud of the moments where our holiness fuels a missional approach to make a difference. This is not just a difference in individual lives, but a motivation for us to go outside our church walls to make societal or cultural differences. In our holiness history, when we have allowed holiness and mission to cooperate, we have affected issues such as slavery and women's issues. Even today we see how Wesleyans are bringing mission and holiness together to plant churches and tackle human trafficking and AIDS.

Some of the greatest beauty of holiness is when it is expressed missionally, outside the church, in culturally relevant ways. It is important for us not to solely define holiness and that which sets us apart from the world. Instead we need to realize that the greatest beauty of holiness is when it is expressed missionally, outside the church, in culturally relevant ways.

While our definition of holiness never changes, its expression must change in order to be effective. What holiness and mission have in common is root, which is the love of God. We pursue holiness to be conformed into the image of God and loving God with our heart and life because He first loved us. We live missionally in our community because His love for us, our love for Him and His love for others is so great, we live to proclaim it. When we embrace both our holiness and mission it is when our church is at its best and we make the greatest impact on the kingdom.

To consider church growth from a holiness perspective it is important to contextualize it in a biblical, theological, and historical framework. The biblical framework is rooted in a closer look at the church of Antioch in the book of Acts. The theological framework is outlined in the concepts of *missio Dei*, Incarnation, and the kingdom of God. The historical framework is detailed in the different types of church planting utilized in church history.

204 **the church at antioch: the sending church**

A look at the development of the church in Acts has to include the crucial role of the church in Antioch. Ed Stetzer illustrates the role this church played in the developing of the church planting in the New Testament in his book:

The founding of the Antioch church may be the most important moment in church planting history. Antioch would send missionaries throughout the world. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Antioch church became the first great missionary-sending church (Acts 13:13). On the other hand, the Jerusalem church turned increasingly inward and lost much of its vision, finally disappearing like the Judaizers of the early Christian movement. In contrast, the Antioch congregation reached the world by becoming the first church planting church!¹

The church in Antioch played an important part in the spreading of the gospel message.

As a result of the persecution of Stephen, many followers of Jesus scattered from Jerusalem. Acts 11 is a record of people who traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (v. 19). Developments in Antioch began to take place as followers from Cyprus and Cyrene went there. In Antioch, the ministry was extraordinary, not only in the travels of the gospel, but also in the audience of the gospel. “Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20). The Luke-Acts account is carefully crafted to show the gospel

¹ Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville: Broadman, 2003), 45.

expanding from Jews to Gentiles. Antioch is one of the places to first document the gospel expanding.

Acts 13 is not only a powerful story for the fruit born in Antioch but also for cultivating the ethos of Antioch:

From Antioch, the first great missionary center where there were both Greek- and Syriac-speaking Christians, the gospel spread not only westward into the Greek-speaking world but eastward in its Syriac form along the ancient trade routes linking the Mediterranean with central Asia, India, and China.²

With a variety of people groups in Antioch from that church, many missionaries went out all over the world. Sharing the gospel with Greeks was new to the early church but became a normative experience for the church in Antioch. The conversion of many in Antioch leads to the commissioning of many to the ends of the known earth. In Acts 13, the Holy Spirit called out Barnabas and Saul. Antioch was in the margins of the formal church and God was at work in the margins:

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In the church at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers; Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.³

Luke began with a quick demographic account of those present. Represented in those mentioned were differences in ethnicity, class, and religious background. These verses are an important record to highlight the significance of the diversity that existed in Antioch. This diversity influenced the creation of a mission-sending church. The diversity is a contrast to the homogenous church in Jerusalem. In the midst of the worship and fasting in Antioch, the Holy Spirit spoke, looking to send Barnabas and Saul. The text in Acts 13 records the beginning of Antioch’s mission work.

theological foundations

Built upon the biblical foundation the following is a theological framework. The theological reflection serves as the framework built on a biblical foundation. In looking at the life and ministry of John Wesley there are three threads that seem to

² Leslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1978), 3.

³ Acts 13:1–3 NIV.

run through his ministry. As one who was continually on the go taking the gospel to many the *missio Dei* (mission of God) was reflected often. The second thread key to his ministry was the Incarnation. Wesley instilled this in those who followed the Lord through the small groups he created. The final aspect to consider was the kingdom of God. Wesley did not organize or create any institution but rather worked to revive the church at large.

Mission of God. *Missio Dei* is a Latin term for the mission of God. The principle of *missio Dei* is contained throughout the Old and New Testament. The *missio Dei* is clear in Jesus' prayer to the Father on behalf of the church in the gospel of John: "As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). This prayer of Jesus presents a new understanding of who God is and what his work is. In their book, Darrell L. Guder et al. summarizes the *missio Dei* as more than the activity of the church; rather, *missio Dei* is a result of "God initiative and rooted in his purposes to restore and heal creation."⁴

206 According to Guder et al., God has always focused on the purpose of encouraging people to understand and encounter who He is. This in turn encourages people to view God in the constant pursuit of its fulfillment. The mission is not a part of what God does or has been about; it is reflective of His identity, character, and purpose.

According to Lesslie Newbigin, two misunderstandings of the *missio Dei* lead to its misapplication: "On the one hand, there are those who place exclusive emphasis on the winning of individuals to conversion, baptism, and church membership. The numerical growth of the church becomes the central goal of mission"⁵. *Missio Dei* is more than an issue of size. In other words, a church can have large numerical numbers and simultaneously have an incomplete or no understanding of the mission of God. *Missio Dei* is defining the heart of God.

A second misunderstanding of *missio Dei* that misses the point altogether is illustrated in the following;

On the other hand, there are those who condemn this as irrelevant or wrong. The gospel, they will say is about God's kingdom, God's reign, over all the nations and all things. At the heart of Jesus' teaching is the prayer: "Your kingdom come; your will be done, as in heaven so on earth"⁶ (Matt. 6:10).⁶ This understanding sees the church's enlargement of influence and its ability to bring about heaven on earth to be the primary task of the church. The trouble begins when people assume that their work brings this into existence.

⁴ Darrell L. Guder et al., *The Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 4.

⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 135.

⁶ Ibid, 135

When a church focuses on numerical growth and increased influence, it does not understand the *missio Dei*. The key, Newbigin states, is “that both parties are inadequately aware of the central reality, namely that mission is not primarily our work—whether of preaching or of social action—but primarily the mighty work of God”⁷. The mission of God is not understood as the work that humans do. It is defined as the work Jesus did on the cross and the continuing presence of the Spirit. In the book of Acts, Jesus asked those gathered to look at his scars. Those scars now defined them as a people and represented the gospel they present. He then asked them to wait for the Spirit. The *missio Dei* is about what God did on the cross and what God is doing now in the world.

In his book, David J. Bosch summarizes the idea of *missio Dei*:

Mission understood as being derived from the very nature of God.[sic] It is thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit expanded to include yet another “movement”: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.⁸

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The difficulty is that the church in Western civilization has not defined God in this way and neither did Israel. Many think mission was a coincidental activity of God that was a result of His loving nature. To link mission with the nature of God, and not just the work, will require a paradigm shift for many in the church. This shift is from understanding mission as the activity of God to the nature of God.

Once people understand mission as not the work of God but the nature of God, then they are able to see the progression from the Father sending the Son and the Son sending the church. John 17:18 states, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” This sending nature flows from the Father to the Son, then to the church. Therefore, mission is not only the nature of the Father and Son, but the church as well. For many churches, mission is one of many items in the budget and one of many activities of church life. The church has defined mission as a program, not any different from worship, prayer, or Sunday school. Nevertheless, the implications of *missio Dei* should be felt and reflected in all of church life. Robert E. Webber defines *missio Dei* this way:

The *Missio Dei* identifies God’s purpose in the world to rescue the world, save it, redeem it, and restore it. To this end, God sent Jesus Christ. By his sacrificial death and resurrection, he has conquered the powers of evil. He has sent his Holy Spirit to apply his saving work to the entire created order.

⁷ Ibid, 136

⁸ David J. Bosch *Transforming Missions: Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 390.

The ramifications of *Missio Dei* are manifold. We do not define God's mission. It defines us. It tells us who we are, what our mission is, how we are to do ministry, worship, spirituality, evangelism. There is not aspect of the Christian life, thought, and ministry that is not connected with God's mission to the world.⁹

The impact of the *missio Dei* is all encompassing. Webber would contend that *missio Dei* affects the way churches look at all ministries. Through the lens of *missio Dei*, people look at every aspect of church and personal life as a way to fulfill this mission. Another way of thinking through the implications is to evaluate all that is done through the grid of the *missio Dei*. Churches need to view things like the prayer ministry, Sunday school, and people's personal walk through the lens of the *missio Dei*.

The most important implication of a theology of *missio Dei* is the incorporation of an understanding of mission as not only the work of God, but reflective of His nature and person as well. Christianity, personally and corporately, reflects mission at its core. *Missio Dei* forces the paradigm shift of seeing the church in the work of God and not God in the work of the church.

The Incarnation. The word *Incarnation* is not technically found in the biblical text. Although it is not found in word, it is indeed reflected in principle:

[Jesus], Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:6–11)

In this text, Paul summarizes the journey of Jesus. Jesus gave up all that was rightly His at the right hand of the Father. He then put on human flesh and in every way became man while remaining God. His life on earth was a journey of obedience to all the Father desired. Jesus was obedient in life and death. Jesus endured the worse the world gave Him. His experience in the flesh was complete from birth to death. His death was on a cross, one of the most humiliating and brutal modes humankind could invent. As a result, the Father exalted Him to the highest place. Since He is in the highest place, when people hear the name of Jesus, everyone will bow his knees and confess with his tongue that Jesus is Lord.

⁹ Robert Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 240–241.

Before Jesus came to earth the possibility of man and God being one in the same was not even considered. Even today, this reality is still beyond full understanding and comprehension. Never has such a man existed on earth. The word *Incarnation* has helped the church to give at least a partial definition to this event. The mystery of the Incarnation is the fact that God took on flesh. At the birth of Christ, God's divinity and man's humanity powerfully intersected. The technical definition of the *Incarnation* is "in the flesh." Much about God is beyond human understanding and definition, the Incarnation fits into this category. The Incarnation was this incredible state of dependence and obedience between the Son and the Father. In the Incarnation, Jesus fought the temptations of man in His humanity and yet committed no sin. Jesus in the Incarnation identified fully with the human condition without the loss of fellowship with the Father. The *Incarnation* is an attempt to define a state that holds in tension the juxtaposed positions of man and God. In the Incarnation, Jesus takes on all of the qualities of the flesh: its weakness, felt needs, and constraints, yet He never ceased being God in power and strength. Jesus was able to identify with humankind—emotions, struggles, and limitations. Most importantly, in being fully God and man, Jesus became the bridge of salvation. The Incarnation has profound and powerful implications for church planting. Incarnational ministry is taking the same journey Jesus did in Philippians 2.

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The incarnation and the *missio Dei* are related in that the Incarnation defines the means by which the Father sent the Son. The Incarnation was the wonderful tool of the *missio Dei*. Therefore, just as the Incarnation was the method by which the Father sent the Son, so incarnational ministry is the method by which the Jesus sends the church. Jesus, motivated by love, made Himself nothing and identified with human need to the point of even coming to where they were, on Earth. Doing incarnational ministry means being motivated in love to set aside rights, comforts, and needs, and setting out to share the love of Christ with others. Incarnational ministry calls people to make many sacrifices every day to reconcile people to the Father. The Incarnation beckons the church to go to the people who need Him. It puts the burden on those who follow Christ to go and not on those in the community to come to the church. The Incarnation calls believers to embody the good news. Those who follow Jesus Christ are a new Incarnation. Those who have the Holy Spirit are a present-day intersection of heaven and earth. Ultimately, the Word needed flesh, which took place in Jesus, to communicate the love of God to man.

The gospel still needs flesh to communicate and embody it today. Stuart Murray states the key of incarnating the gospel: "Church planting cannot be

equated with participation in *missio Dei* unless these churches are communicating good news to the wider community and incarnating the good news that they are proclaiming.”¹⁰ The ministry of Jesus was always this dynamic interaction between the proclamation and presence of God’s Word. This combination of hearing and experiencing of God led many to follow Jesus. This combination is certainly the pattern in Acts 2. Here Peter proclaimed the gospel of Christ and in the next text outlines the new church experience (2:42–47). A key similarity between the incarnation of Christ and the churches’ incarnational ministry is the ultimate goal. At the Resurrection, Jesus was glorified and seated at the right hand of the Father. The church’s incarnational ministry at its best exalts Jesus. Incarnational ministry is a way of being, not just a new church program:

The issue is not simply one of ecclesiastical reengineering. Rather we are talking about a radically different way of being the Church. For the incarnational presence of the church in the world demands our dying to self—to our self-reliance, self-centered promotion and selfish concerns—in order for Christ to be glorified among his people.¹¹

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The implications for the Incarnation are as important today as they were for the early church. Webber explains them this way:

This early church apologetic may be rightly called an incarnational apology. The church is the continuation of the incarnation. It is the earthed reality of the presence of Jesus in and to the world. Herein lies the ancient apologetic. The church by its very existence is a witness to the presence of God in history (Eph. 3:10). There is only one actual incarnation of God and that is in Jesus Christ, but the church, being his body, sustains an incarnational dimension. The church is a witness to the presence of Jesus in the world as it embodies and lives out the faith.¹²

The early church had no book on which to rely for the communication of the good news. The people communicated the message of salvation through spoken word. Today the church needs to read the Word as well as become the embodiment of the Word. A church plant must both proclaim and be the Word of God in its community and world.

The first leg of the stool of theological foundations is the *missio Dei*, the realization that God is a sending God. The Father has sent the Son; the Son has sent the church. Christ is the example for the church. The second leg is the Incarnation where the Church becomes the embodiment of the Word. The church,

¹⁰ Stuart Murray, *Church Planting; Laying Foundations* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2001), 45.

¹¹ Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How we do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 219.

¹² Robert Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 95.

motivated in love, surrenders all rights, comforts, and needs to go to those who do not know Jesus Christ. In a church plant, its existence has to be rooted in the mission of God and its mode has to be rooted in the incarnation. The third leg of the theological foundational stool is the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God. For a mother congregation to birth a new church takes a great commitment to the kingdom of God. A kingdom of God mentality is crucial for the new church plant to be motivated to reach a community and a necessity if a mother congregation is going to hive off and create a new church. This mindset is to consider what is best for the kingdom of God, even over the perceived betterment of the church. When a church intentionally sends people with a church planter, attendance and resources of the mother congregation are impacted. Without understanding and focus on the kingdom of God, such an endeavor makes no common sense. When properly motivated, churches plant churches through multiplication to further the kingdom.

The kingdom concept is not only important for a missional understanding of the church. It is even more important because it is central to the teachings of Jesus. As was shown in the biblical foundations section, church planting was a logical conclusion to the explosion of the gospel and the sending of the church into the world. The subject of church planting was more peripheral in the New Testament. Nevertheless, the kingdom of God was central to the teachings of Jesus and the new church development throughout the New Testament. The relationship between the kingdom and the church needs to be clearly defined if it is to be properly understood:

If they are functioning properly, churches will be agents of the kingdom, signposts to the kingdom, sacraments of the kingdom, provisional representations of the kingdom, proclaiming the demonstrating the kingdom, pointing to what is coming when the kingdom is fully established, but they can never be equated with the kingdom.¹³

The church functions at its best when it represents and points to the kingdom in its fullness. This relationship is worked out in three specific ways.

First, the church is a community and the kingdom of God is its activity. Church is the gathering of people around the central person of Jesus Christ. The kingdom, nevertheless, is the best Christianity has to offer in activity. *Kingdom of God* properly defined is not the gathering of people, but the activity of God in the world. The church becomes a natural extension and context of kingdom activity, but it is not the activity of the kingdom in itself. The church is God's agent to build

¹³ Stuart Murray, *Church Planting; Laying Foundations* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2001), 47.

the kingdom, but not the only way God works. To think of the church as an extension of the activity of God is key to the theological framework; however, assuming the church is an automatic advancement of the kingdom is false. Churches may be planted without advancement of the kingdom. In addition, the kingdom can be advanced without the church.

Second, the kingdom exists in a broader sense than just through the church. This point is inferred from the previous section but is important enough to state explicitly. To think of the kingdom as being larger than the church is to remember that God is at work outside the church as well as in and through it. The kingdom of God is contained in the work of the Holy Spirit, not merely the work of the church. The work of the kingdom of God is not solely found in the work of the church, but, more importantly, the work of the church is part of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is manifest in the sharing of the gospel from one person to another. The church is not the kingdom of God but instead is an arm of the kingdom activity.

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Third, the kingdom defines the mission of God. The mission of God has to be defined and contextualized in the kingdom of God rather than the work of the church. If misunderstood, the kingdom of God might only be explained in terms of church planting, winning souls, or evangelizing. These are all good things but not the ultimate goal. The goal is not the accomplishment of these events but the advancement of the kingdom of God. The distinction between church planting being a matter of eschatology rather than ecclesiology is vital. Church planting needs to be viewed as a channel of God's work in the world and not the end goal. The church may be viewed as a principal agent of the mission, but not the mission itself. The kingdom of God is fulfilled when the mission of God is accomplished. Therefore, the definition of success in the church is the fulfillment of the *missio Dei* and is best understood in these terms. "The mission of God is what God is doing in the world through the church, and even without the church, to bring his creation to its consummation: unity and fullness in Jesus Christ."¹⁴

The *missio Dei*, Incarnation, and kingdom of God are the threefold development of a properly understood missiology. The second segment of the theological foundations is found in the topic of ecclesiology. The purpose of the church and how it grows is important to consider, but the "why" of church formation also needs to be defined.

¹⁴ Paul R. Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 193.

historical foundations

Church planting has been taking place ever since the first century, yet many Christians have no idea how their own congregation was started. A new church can appear to be a brand new venture; nevertheless, understanding church planting through the centuries gives the congregation the background of two thousand years. The basic outline of the historical foundations section is found in Murray's *Church Planting: Laying Foundations*. This text is enhanced through interaction with the works of George Hunter III as it relates to the Apostolic, Celtic, and Wesleyan church planting. The historical foundation is established in the apostolic, pioneering, replacement, sectarian, saturation and multiplication church planting.

apostolic church planting

The call of Jesus to the church is clear as Hunter states, "Jesus Christ calls his churches to love, believe in, serve, reach out to, welcome, and receive those people and populations that society's establishment regards as unlikely or even hopeless, and to deploy their converts in witness and ministry."¹⁵ The most obvious quality of the call of Jesus is the sense of being sent. The sending of the apostles serves as the foundation of their name and purpose. They are by definition those who take the gospel and are sent to people who do not know Jesus. The other important point is that the apostles' ministry includes, but is not inclusive to, the preaching of the Word. Jesus sends the apostles with the additional purposes to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons (Matt. 10:7-8). The third worthy notation of the apostolic ministry is their work with difficult prospects. Hunter notes in that "a number of the apostolic legends report apostles reaching such peoples as barbarians and cannibals."¹⁶ The apostles went everywhere they could, to anyone they could to share the gospel of Christ.

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pioneer church planting

Following the New Testament for the next three hundred years, the church grew while the Roman Empire declined. During Constantine's reign, imperial resources became available to the church. In many different locations and ways, the gospel was spread through the pioneering work of many people to many portions of the world.

The ministry of John Wesley is one example of the pioneering work that took place through the centuries. Though not successful in his own missionary efforts in

¹⁵ George Hunter *Radical Outreach: The Recovery of Apostolic Ministry and Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 41

¹⁶ *Ibid*: 55

America, a number of features of John and Charles Wesley's works apply to pioneering endeavors. The first feature would be indigenous ministries:

They felt called to reach the working peoples of England, who never went to church, whom the established church had written off. The Wesleys demonstrated that forms of outreach that "fit" a people make it more possible for them to respond than do alien or "superior" cultural forms.¹⁷

214 One of the ways John and Charles ministered in indigenous forms was through the writing and preaching in common rhetoric. They spoke in a way that was understood by the common people. John especially made the principle of clarity a great priority when speaking. In fact, on a number of occasions, Wesley encouraged his preachers to speak in a way that was common for the people. Charles Wesley wrote hymnody easily recognized and followed by the people. John published many tracts that plainly explained the gospel. He also wrote on various topics and published them in tracts to provide not only spiritual but also practical help to people as well. John also studied the people to whom he ministered. He became very familiar with a variety of cultures and contexts and communicated accordingly.

A second feature of John Wesley's ministry is the variety of groups he created for the people's spiritual growth:

He was instrumental in spawning many hundreds of classes, bands, societies, and other groups with distinct agendas, and he labored to develop the indigenous lay leadership that this growing vast network of groups would need. He was driven to multiplying "classes" for these served best as recruiting groups, as ports of entry for new people, and for involving awakened people with the gospel and its power.¹⁸

John Wesley was fully aware that in order for his field preaching to stay with people he would have to give them other opportunities to grow in their faith. These many units also provided ways that people could get involved and be able to share and grow in Christ while in community. Laity ministered to many through these groups. This small group creation brought tremendous width and breadth to the ministry of Wesley. The church-planting strategy of Wesley has many present-day applications. One of these applications is the attraction of a crowd in a new area. Another key application is the ministry of small groups. These do not take large buildings to accomplish, and they are often the best atmosphere for life transformation.

¹⁷ George Hunter, *To Spread the Power: Church Growth in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 53.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 56

replacement church planting

At different times through the centuries, the church has taken part in replacement planting. “Replacement planting has to do with the practice of establishing churches in areas where churches had previously been planted, but no longer exist, due to factors such as persecution or decline.”¹⁹ One of the best examples of replacement planting was St. Patrick. In the late fourth century or early fifth, Patrick grew up in northeast England. Hunter notes a number of principles of Patrick’s ministry for church planting today. First, St. Patrick sent his missionaries in groups to interact with the people of Ireland. Second, they took a holistic or incarnational ministry approach to the people. Third, they invited the people into their community and then invited them to a gospel decision, rather than the other way around. The formula may be understood as establishing a community with the unchurched, engaging in conversation, discovering what they believe, and inviting commitment to Jesus. One of the best reasons to highlight the ministry of St. Patrick is the similarities between the culture to which he ministered and the culture of today. Hunter notes three distinct similarities. “Less and less people have ever been substantially influenced by religion, more suspicious of people and institutions that claim authority, more churches assuming the unchurched are beyond reach.”²⁰

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sectarian church planting

The focus, work, and intention of such people such as Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin were the creation of new churches. Nevertheless, many churches have been planted based on a deeply held conviction of doctrinal and ecclesiological matters. “The Anabaptist movement is the classic example of the search for the New Testament church life which has motivated many church planting movements and led to the emergence of many denominations.”²¹ Sectarian church plants receive the most criticism of all other forms because the primary focus is not renewal of the existing church. A sectarian church plant requires strong leadership to keep growing after the initial transfer of people.

saturation church planting

Saturation is a term more familiar to contemporary church planting circles. It is a method made popular around in the late 1900s. The idea is to saturate an area with new churches in hopes of softening an area toward the gospel. This movement is the planting of churches based on cultural and not doctrinal distinctives. It is a

¹⁹ Stuart Murray, *Church Planting; Laying Foundations* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2001), 88.

²⁰ George Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West . . . Again* (Nashville: Abingdon 2000), 96–97.

²¹ Stuart Murray, *Church Planting; Laying Foundations* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2001), 96.

realization that the Great Commission requires strategies to enable “Christ to become incarnate in the life of a vital, witnessing congregation among every group of 500 to 1000 people of every class, kind, and condition of mankind.”²² Offering church in a variety of cultural expressions provides the opportunity for many people to respond to the gospel. Since saturation is such a new expression of church planting, research has not been done as to its validity.

multiplication (hiving off) church planting

The particular context of this study, a mother church planting a daughter congregation, is an example of church multiplication planting. A definition of church multiplication or hiving off is defined by George Patterson and Richard Scoggins:

An obedient church, in which our God-given gifts harmonized in love by the power of the Holy Spirit, has an inherent, God-given power to multiply itself indefinitely, just as all other living things do that God has created. Growth by addition is seen in Acts 2:41, when 3,000 converts were added by baptism to the new church in Jerusalem. Growth by multiplication appears in Acts 8, 10, 13, 14, and 16, where daughter churches are born.”²³

Patterson and Scoggins note that church multiplication has been around since the New Testament. Nevertheless, for many Christians today it is a new concept. Most Christians today would associate church planting with the idea of a pastor coming to a community and starting a church. One of the best ways is for a group of people to move out from an existing healthy congregation to start a new church. In a technical definition, hiving off is the breaking away from an existing group. C. Peter Wagner applies the term to church planting and defines “hiving off” as follows:

Hiving off is the most common way of planting a daughter church. It simply means that the members of a local congregation are challenged to form a nucleus and at a predetermined time, these people will move out under the leadership of a church planter and become the charter members of a new congregation. This usually assumes that the new church will be in the same general geographical area so that the nucleus members will not be expected to make a residential move.”²⁴

Successful church multiplication is often initiated by a charismatic leader but is not a project for the leader alone. It needs to become a congregational burden. Church multiplication is the strategic sending of a group of individuals to reach a region more effectively. The daughter congregation is often a different expression of

²² Luis Bush, *AD 2000 and Beyond Handbook* (Colorado Springs: AD 2000 and Beyond Movement 1993), 21.

²³ George Patterson and Richard Scoggins, *Church Multiplication Guide* (Pasadena, CA: Carey, 1993), 12.

²⁴ Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1990), 60–61.

ministry from the mother church to meet the needs of different individuals. Different types of churches are needed to reach different kinds of people groups and generations.

The holiness perspective adds value to our understanding of church growth. The holiness perspective has a biblical, theological, and historical contribution to the conversation.

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