

The Homogeneous Unit In Mission Theory

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One of the most fruitful concepts to be born in the Church Growth School of Thought is that of the Homogeneous Unit as a basic ecclesiastical building block. The term has been used for a dozen years and has grown more and more useful. The historian finds that it unlocks many a riddle concerning the expansion of Christianity. The anthropologist recognizes it as a wider and more elastic term than culture. The missionary uses it constantly as he evangelizes out beyond the Church. The minister and shepherd discovers that he serves his flock better when he sees Christians in their particular societies. The theologian finds the homogeneous unit firmly imbedded in the Bible.

The classical definition of the "homogeneous unit" given in *Understanding Church Growth* reads as follows : "A homogeneous unit is a section of society in which all members have some characteristic in common." Thus a homogeneous unit (or HU as we call it in church growth jargon) may be a political or geographical unit or sub-unit, the characteristic in common being that all the members live within certain geographical confines. The HU may be all the people who live in a province or state, a county or township, a valley, plateau, or plain.

The homogeneous unit may be a segment of society whose common characteristic is a language or dialect -- like Hindi-speaking people, the Hakka-speaking Chinese, or the thousands of Portuguese-speaking persons who live south of Boston.

The HU may be an ethnic unit -- a caste in India, Jews in the United States, or the Egon tribe in the southwest corner of Nigeria. Often it is rewarding to think of some segment of society, the members of which

have several characteristics in common. They live in one area, speak one language, belong to one ethnic unit, and have about the same level of education and income .

Since we are talking about church growth, we shall limit ourselves to two ways of thinking about the homogeneous unit. (a) We think of it as one specific *ethnos* to be brought to faith and obedience (Romans 16: 26). Thus, rather than speaking of evangelizing Indonesia, we speak more correctly of evangelizing 50,000 Hakka Chinese in West Kalimantan. (b) We think of it as a “homogeneous unit Church.” Thus in Southern California, Spanish- speaking Baptist congregations comprise a homogeneous unit Church. The problems of that specific HU Church are quite distinct and can profitably be considered by themselves.

The idea of the homogeneous unit is very elastic. That is one of its beauties. When American ministers speak of town and gown, they are recognizing two large loose homogeneous units. When the attention of the world was focused on the Auca Indians, it was thinking about a small tight HU of less than 500 souls. The context must be considered in using the term or understanding it.

It would be entirely proper to speak of the Methodist Church in India as a homogeneous unit. It would be equally proper, however, and more revealing to speak of conglomerate urban Methodist congregations in India as comprising one homogeneous unit and Methodist people movement Churches as comprising another. People movements or mono-ethnic Churches could again be considered one by one. In which case, the homogeneous units would be the Madiga Church of West Andhra Province, the Mehra Church of Bastar State, and the like.

Missiologists occasionally talk about ‘The Church’ in a wide general fashion, but when they do, they are talking inexactly. In a sense, ‘The Church’ does not exist at all. It is a sheer generalization. The great theologian Schliermacher once illustrated the point by taking his students to a restaurant and ordering fruit. When the waiter brought a tray of pears, apples, grapes and peaches, Schliermacher dashed it to the ground and said angrily. “Waiter, I told you to bring *fruit* and all you have brought is apples, peaches, pears and grapes.” As the students looked on aghast, Schliermacher tipped the waiter liberally and said, “You see fruit is an abstraction. There is in fact no fruit. There are only apples and peaches and other particular fruits. Only they have real existence.” In a sense ‘The Church’ exists only in specific homogeneous unit churches.

THE BEARING OF HOMOGENEOUS UNITS ON CHURCH GROWTH

The concept of the homogeneous unit is extremely useful to the missionary movement because of the particularity of church growth. The Church never grows in a vacuum it always grows among men. It never grows among mankind in general - it always grows in homogeneous units.

Since the Church at any given time is growing in many homogeneous units, and often several of these march under one ecclesiological banner. Churches and mission often fail to see the HUs and instead talk in terms of large vague wholes. The Lutherans in Tanzania now number a half million souls 'is a very thin truth. It tells us little. Furthermore it distorts the reality. One thinks immediately of Lutheran fruit in Tanzania and fails to recognize that all there is there is Lutheran pineapples, bananas, mangoes and durians. He fails to think in terms of the Chagga Church, the Arusha Church, the nearby but quite different Masai Church, and the urban congregations made up of finely-educated evolve Lutherans.

Furthermore, as American missiologists think of the multitudinous denominations around the world, they often deliberately strain out particularity. They do not like it. Often they have been English-speaking missionaries, teaching in English, in theological seminaries and other institutions, and associating with the upper crust of the Church in the land where they served. When they travel they meet the ministers, who are generally well educated, and thus see one rather atypical segment of the many African Churches. That is, instead of seeing vividly tens of thousands of homogeneous unit churches, we missiologists tend to see 'The Church' whose members look alike and think alike and obviously are One. The fact that in America the various populations have been fairly well blended conditions us to see Christians as all one people. In the United States, everyone speaks English, drives the same kind of cars, watches football games on New Year's Day, lives in similar houses and watches the same television programs. We like to think that Christians, at any rate, are all one. We don't like to emphasize differences. We strain them out.

Nevertheless, if one is to see the Church scientifically and realistically he must see it as made up of tens of thousands of distinct denominations or Churches. I call attention to several significant bearings of this fact. First, Churches grow very differently in different homogeneous units. A few years ago, the United Christian Missionary* sent me to Puerto Rico to study its Church there. The Church had been growing rather well,

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increasing four fold between 1933 and 1955, and the Society wanted to know what its growth potential was.

For some weeks, I travelled to all the congregations, studied the annual memberships, interviewed ministers and missionaries, read the books and articles available - but did not get much light as to what was really happening. Then I found a list of accurate membership figures for 1948 of each of the 48 congregations which made up the Church. I already had the membership figures for 1955 and thus could draw a seven year line of growth for each congregation. Immediately it became clear that "our Puerto Rican Church" was made up of *four* homogeneous unit Churches. Their patterns will be thrown on the screen. They did much evangelism and won many converts, but emigration to the United States kept them static. The small town congregations -- with one notable exception -- had plateaued at around eighty members. The big urban congregations were growing well. The small new urban congregations were having great difficulty getting off the ground. Subsidy was being poured into them -- but to no effect. The impression that our Puerto Rican Church is growing well was true of only six of the forty-eight congregations.

We need not trouble ourselves with the reasons for these different patterns, nor shall I take time to suggest what each homogeneous unit Church should have done to fulfill its function and calling. Suffice it to say that until the homogeneous units and their growth patterns were seen clearly, the generalization which was being made ("our Church in Puerto Rico is growing well") was misleading. It distorted the true picture and induced a false sense of well being. The Church, missionary society, ministers and mission concerned could not allocate their resources intelligently on the basis of the generalization. The particularity of church growth must never be forgotten. What grows is the homogeneous unit Church. Till we see that, leaders are lost on a trackless sea.

It is obvious, of course, that the totality exists. There was, indeed, a 'Christian Church in Puerto Rico' which consisted of four clusters of congregations. As Churches arise they are rightfully concerned with the formation of large and effective administrative units. All this goes without saying. What I am here affirming, however, is that the totality is not the only concern of the Church and the mission. Both must be much more concerned with the parts which make up the whole.

Second, each HU Church grows according to its own patterns. There was not one Puerto Rican pattern: there were four. Missiologists should not see the pattern of the Church in Zaire, but rather the scores,

or more probably the hundreds of HU Churches in that great republic, each growing according to its own pattern. Some have matured and will grow no more by conversion, only by biological growth. Some will get slight conversion growth but tremendous transfer growth. Some are tied to growing cities, some to decaying countrysides. Each has its own pattern.

Third, each homogeneous unit Church has its own rate of growth. Some are growing rapidly, some slowly. Some have ceased growing. Some are declining. No responsible missiologist will put much reliance on a rate of growth true for a whole field. The field rate cancels out the victories and the defeats, the units that are growing and those that are not, and gives a deceptive generalization. In his study of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, Shearer showed how an accurate graph of growth of each presbytery (see the screen) prevented facile and erroneous generalizations and enabled the real causes of the spread of the Christian faith in Korea to be discerned. By way of contrast, when A. W. Wasson, the Methodist, wrote *Church Growth in Korea*, he missed much of the story because he worked entirely from field totals. Any true understanding of church growth must rest it on the growth of the homogeneous unit Churches.

Fourth, each homogeneous unit Church has not only its own pattern and rate of growth, but also its own limitations. Some HU's number millions. In one of them a Church of twenty thousand communicants has barely started its work. Some HU's number only twenty thousand souls. In one of them a Church of 7,000 communicants has completed its task. The limitations may have nothing to do with numbers. For instance, a very large limitation facing Jewish evangelization in the United States is that Jewish converts melt very rapidly into the Gentile Churches, thus every Jew who believes in Christ feels called on to cease being culturally, politically and racially a Jew. If in the United States we saw many strong Jewish Christian congregations in which pork was not eaten and Christians preserved intact a Jewish ethnic identity, many more Jews would become Christians. Persecution, in Moslem and other homogeneous units, imposes stringent limitations on Churches developing within them.

Fifth, each homogeneous Church has its own *elan*, its own vital force, its own assistance from the outside. Its assisting mission may be powerful or weak, long lasting or transient, rich or poor.

These five factors assure that each homogeneous unit Church is unique -- an entity in itself.

The fact that many homogeneous units can be broken down into still smaller units emphasizes what we have been saying. In the School of

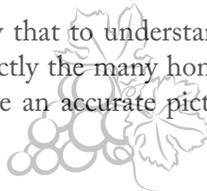
World Mission at Pasadena, Herman Tegenfeldt, professor of missions at Bethel Seminary, has been writing a doctoral dissertation on the Kachin Church in which he worked for many years. The Kachin Church occupies a specific area in North Burma. Its leaders meet in annual convention. It is one Church. Yet it is comprised of congregations in four major tribes speaking Jinghpaw, Maru, Rawang, and Lisu -- four languages as distinct as French and Italian. The One Church is really four HU Churches!

Professor Philip of Eastern Theological College at Jorhat Assam has been doing a research in the Christianization of the 409,824 Nagas of Eastern India. More than half of them are now Christian and the rest appear likely to follow suit. The Church numbers 247,069 souls. As the research proceeded, it became clear to Professor Philip, Dr. Orr, his mentor, and myself that we were dealing with fourteen different patterns of Church growth, a separate one in each of the fourteen Naga tribes. For instance, the Ao were evangelized during a period when American missionaries played a key role. The border Naga tribes, in each of which the Church is now well planted, are being evangelized almost entirely by missionaries of the Ao Church and other earlier established tribal Churches.

The Angami Church, in marked contrast to the rest, grew slowly for fifty years. There were few multi-individual conversions. Most converts came in one by one against the family. This was partially due to the fact that, since the mission station was at the state capital, Kohima, the local congregation became a multi-ethnic or conglomerate church. To the Angami, joining this mongrel lot looked like betraying their own people. To become a Christian looked like leaving the Angami tribe.

In a similar fashion the congregations of larger denominations in any great city divide into several groups -- those on this side of the tracks and those on that. In the fifty-one Christian Churches in Kansas City, for example, one finds a group of wealthy suburban churches of which "The Country Club Christian Church" is the leader. A few years ago, fifty-three of its members were also members of the Rotary Club of Kansas City. One also finds a group of Christian Churches in rather ordinary neighborhoods.

In general, one must say that to understand the missionary task in any country, one must see exactly the many homogeneous units which compose the land and must have an accurate picture of the state of the Church in each.



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THE BEARING OF HOMOGENEOUS UNITS ON INDIGENEITY

It is beyond question that missions should not only establish congregations of baptized believers but see to it that these are indigenous. Our times are highly conscious of the danger of new churches being weak transplants of foreign organizations rather than strong indigenous plants. Mission after mission pledges itself to the indigenous method. Course after course is offered in missionary training schools on The Indigenous Church. Books on the subject pour off our presses.

What is not so generally recognized is that each homogeneous unit has its own culture language and ethnic stream, and that the Church must become indigenous to it. Till it does, the Church grows slowly if at all. The battle has been fairly well won against imposing Eurican standards on Afericasian denominations; but the battle has not been won against imposing national standards on each of the homogeneous unit Churches within the nation. Indeed, this battle has not commonly been recognized.

Exactly as the blacks in the United States feel threatened by the common white culture, so homogeneous unit Churches feel threatened by patterns of Christianity common to the national Church. Men who have not yet become Christians feel even more threatened. For example, if all the whites in Tennessee were pagan and all the blacks were Christian, and if becoming a Christian meant joining a black Church and giving up white culture, whites would become Christians very slowly, if at all. The principle here is that when "becoming Christian" meant joining another culture, kindred, and marriage market, the Church grows slowly if at all.

Numerous examples can be cited. The spread of the Evangelical faith into the Maya Indian tribes in Guatemala was badly handicapped because the existing Protestant congregations and denominations were thoroughly mestizo and Spanish in their membership, leadership, ways of worship and webs of relationship. To "become an Evangelical" meant "ceasing to be Indian."

People movements all round the world languish and often die because the only pattern is that of the conglomerate or mongrel congregation made up of members of many different homogeneous units. To be baptized and join that is effectively to deny the tribe. Rev. Canjanam Gamaliel, professor in Concordia Seminary in Nagercoil, says that caste Hindus universally believe that joining a Christian church is not primarily confessing Christ, but rather becoming a Harijan -- i.e., a former Untouchable.

In short, if when Christ is first proclaimed in a new ethnic unit, converts are not free to remain in that culture, to be better members of that tribe or caste to marry exclusively within the ethnic unit and to rear children proud of being part of it, proclamation is severely handicapped. Often it is done in vain. When the conglomerate national pattern dominates, the homogeneous unit pattern emerges with great difficulty.

The danger today is not that the Church look Eurican, but that the younger Church first established impose its ways on converts from new homogeneous units. Missionary or Eurican imperialism is being replaced by national imperialism, which is all the more dangerous because many of its leaders believe that they have a divine mandate to spread the national culture.

Against all this, missiology should recognize that each homogeneous unit Church has a contribution to make to the denomination. It can make this better when it has a life of its own. The National Church in each land is not engaged in a crusade to reduce all ethnic units to a dead level of uniformity, but rather, growing strong indigenous Churches in many HUs, to welcome and preserve the ethnic treasures of them all. Men are today looking for their own identity and often finding it in their own societies. In India when I would ask a person who he was, he would often reply by giving me his caste. As an individual he was unimportant; what counted was that he was a Rawat or an Agharia. The spread of Christianity must not destroy these societies and identities. Rather it must enhance them.

Lutheran theologians have maintained that tribes and castes do not arise casually by themselves. Nor are they the creation of Satan. Rather, they are orders created by God for the preservation of mankind. The Lutheran missiologist Gutmann maintained that the tribe was the organism and must not be replaced by an organization, the Church. What he aimed at was the Christianization of the entire ethnic unit, not its destruction.

Each homogeneous unit has therefore a right to be different and to maintain that difference as it comes into the Body of Christ. When I was recently in Addis Ababa I was questioning a Presbyterian missionary evangelizing the *Nuers* in the western lowlands of Ethiopia. *Nuers* are refugees from the terror in South Sudan. It is a custom of the tribe that when a boy becomes a man, he lies down and a practitioner makes five cuts in his scalp. Each cut runs from behind the ear across the forehead and to behind the other ear. Boys lie impassively as cutting takes place. A pool of blood gathers under their heads.

“Do Christian youth submit to this scarification?” I asked. “Yes,” replied the missionary. “We feel that since it is a non-moral matter, involves no idol worship, and strongly identifies youth with the tribe, it should be considered normal for Christians.” This is good missionary practice. However, since the Presbyterian Church in Ethiopia does not go in for scarification and considers it a savage and hideous custom, it is likely that as the *Nuer* Presbyterian Church comes more and more into the orbit of the upland Churches, it will feel the pressure of the Ethiopian Pattern. Ethiopian Presbyterian imperialism may lead the small *Nuer* Church to outlaw scarification. When it does so, one of the outstanding marks of *Nuer*hood will disappear forever from the *Nuer* Church. Should this happen after the whole tribe is disciplined, no one could have any objection. But if the custom is outlawed while the Church is still a small minority in the tribe, it may divert attention from essential Christianity to outward signs and will give the pagan *Nuers* grounds to believe that “becoming Christian” is traitorously renouncing the tribe.

For maximum sound discipling, for maximum communication of the Gospel, each homogeneous unit must be encouraged to remain itself, its own different self until discipling is complete. The task of the Church and missions is not to spread a uniform world culture, a national language, a western way of life, or a secular outlook. A chief and irreplaceable task of the Church is to make disciples of all nations or -- to translate the Greek more accurately -- to disciple the homogeneous units of mankind (*ta ethne*). Men should not, in the process of becoming Christians, lose their characteristics which, they feel, give them authenticity and preserve their identity.

To be sure sometimes the rate of change is so great, the changes being proposed are so desirable, and the whole unit is moving so rapidly, that abandoning certain customs works to the advantage of discipling. When such is the case, no missiologist would stupidly advocate sticking to old ways. I assume a common sense approach.

An important principle of church growth is that “discipling each homogeneous unit out to the fringes is more desirable as a rule than establishing conglomerate congregations in many contiguous HUs.”

When each unit has a cluster of vigorous congregations in its midst made up exclusively of its own folk, then “becoming Christian” involves neither denying one’s own HU, nor traitorously joining a strange people. The decision to “become a disciple of Christ” is then a religious decision, as it was for the Jews in Judea and Galilee during the years 31 to about

55 A.D. As the Church then spreads it liberates its own people without raising difficult questions of cross-race dining, marriage and the like.

In contrast, if homogeneous units are disregarded and churches established in many of these so that “becoming a Christian” gets the image of leaving your unit for a larger conglomerate mongrel whole, then two things happen, (a) The resulting Church is weak, is split by factions and is an organization rather than an organism, (b) The resulting conglomerate churches find it difficult to grow because every invitation to “love the Lord and follow him” sounds like an invitation to “leave your brethren and join ours.”

The importance of homogeneous units to indigeneity can now be seen more clearly. The Church, as it spreads into each homogeneous unit, should take on the color of that unit -- a color necessarily different from all the other colors in a given land. To the foreign missionary, all Kenyans may look alike but the Kenyans know better. They know which are Luo, which are Kikuyu and which are Kamba. Each people has a high consciousness of peoplehood and intends to retain it. The old European imperialist dream of smashing tribal consciousness in Africa and caste consciousness in India is clearly not going to come true in this generation, and probably not in the next either. Both for reasons of justice, and to preserve the richness of the many patterns, the Church should seek not to erase variations in indigenous patterns, but to enshrine them. Tribesmen should believe that they become better tribesmen when they become Christian -- more loyal, more respectful to their ancestors, more loving to their peers. Castes in India should cease to regard Christianity as their doom. Rather, Christianity will take the riches of each caste and make them gleam and shine.

BEARING OF HU'S ON ECUMENICITY AND THE ONE CHURCH

The Church of Christ, said Alexander Campbell, the founder of the ten- million member family of Christian Churches, is intentionally, essentially, and constitutionally one. It has one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all and one Book. On the rock of Peter's Confession, our Lord said, 'I will found my Church.' On biblical grounds, it is impossible to think in terms of Churches, led by different lords, considering different books as authority, and built on different foundations. The foundation of the Church is Christ! Other foundation can no man lay.

The proposal I am advancing is that as the Church spreads throughout mankind, it does not pull men and women out of all

homogeneous units and make them into one new variety of man in one new organization. Rather, the Church forms itself in each new homogeneous unit, taking on its color, using its institutions, value systems, webs of relationship, and other components of culture, and thus Christianizing both individuals and society. It does this while remaining the Body of Christ, the one Body of Christ, the one Household of God.

As you consider my proposal, please do so, not on my authority, but the authority of the Bible. I have seen enough of the questionable practice of advancing some attractive theory and then gleaning from the Bible enough support proof texts, selected with enough sophistication to deceive the unwary, and adducing the whole as the biblical revelation hidden for long ages and just revealed -- through the new prophet. When he cannot find suitable texts in the New Testament he goes to the Old Testament, and when the Old Testament texts do not suit his purpose, he selects a few abstruse and incomplete passages from the New Testament. I have no desire to add to this sort of thing.

I seek rather to discover the plain meaning of the main currents of Scripture, paying special attention to how these have been interpreted through the ages by the Church, especially the New Testament church.

There I find that the Church is continually spoken of as One. It is the Body of Christ. It is the Household of God. It is the Church of God or the Church of Christ. It is made up of baptized believers in Jesus Christ, who have become new creatures in Him. They walk in Him and in no one else. His is the only Name by which men must be saved. There is no other. He alone is the Door, the Gate, the Way, the Life, the Truth. Christ has broken down the wall of hostility between Jewish and Gentile Christians and made them both one new race. "There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women, you are all one in union with Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28 (Good News for Modern Man) .

Ephesians 2 11 to 3 19 strongly supports the conviction that the Church' is one new race. The passage says plainly that Christ Himself has made Jews and Gentiles one people, and "has abolished the Jewish Law ... in order to create out of the two races a single new people in union with Himself" (2 14, 25). The next verse says, "He united both races into one single body."

Since this is the case, would not every step toward recognizing separate homogeneous unit Churches be a backward step, an unbiblical procedure? What we are asking, of course, is in what sense do the races and

tongues and cultural units “become one” in Christ? My thesis is that they become one in a sense which still allows for considerable ethnic diversity. I maintain that as the Church spreads to thousands of homogeneous units, each unit becomes part of the great Unity while maintaining considerable cultural and ethnic diversity.

No one is arguing that we should be planting many different Churches. The whole conviction of Christians today rushes in the direction of open affirmation of the essential, intentional and constitutional unity of the Church of Christ. Yet, does this mean uniformity? Does this leave room for a diversity resolved to remain diverse? Can blacks maintain their cultural diversity in the Christian Church, or, to maintain diversity, must they become Muslims?

As I read the crucial passages in the Bible I see that under the pressure of the battle for brotherhood, they have been made to say more than they mean. Rightly interpreted they leave ample room for a diversity resolved to maintain cultural and racial distance between itself and other parts of the Church.

Take, for example, Galatians 3:28. It says that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female. They are all one in union with Christ. They have this unity, it is clear, while maintaining diversity. It is not at all that on becoming Christian male and female are changed into neuter beings, or that the slave and freeman become something half way between slaves and freeman, or that Jews cease being Jews and Gentiles cease being Gentiles. On the contrary, pig eaters continue to eat pig and non-pig eaters continue not to eat pig and both are one in the Spirit. That is the important thing. Oneness in Christ does not mean being run through a blending machine which turns peas, carrots and cucumbers into a bland vegetable soup.

Ephesians 2.18 to 3.6 speaks as if Jews and Gentiles, while in “one single body” continued to be culturally Jews and Gentiles. This is plainly said in four verses. The twenty-second verse is quite explicit:

You (Gentiles) too are being built, together with all the others, into a house where God lives through His Spirit.

Verse eighteen says, “Jews and Gentiles are able to come in the One Spirit into the presence of the Father.” Aramaic-speaking Jews practicing circumcision remain exactly such. Greek-speaking uncircumcised Gentiles remain such exactly. Scripture states explicitly that the circumcised should remain circumcised, and the uncircumcised should remain uncircumcised.

(I Cor. 7:18) Marble, granite, concrete, wood and plaster all are built into one 'sacred temple' (Ephesians 2:21) but they all remain different substances. The Bible affirms clearly that men of each homogeneous unit, when they believe in Christ and become new creatures in Him, become parts of His One Body. The Bible implies clearly that the HU's do this while maintaining cultural diversity. Because they are all part of Christ, they love each other. While one speaks Greek and the other Aramaic, the one eats pork and the other does not, both have equal access to God in the One Spirit.

The Ecumenical Movement has rightly stressed the unity of the Church. It has done the cause of Christ good by insisting that the Church is intentionally and essentially one. World mission and evangelism must hold firmly that there is only one Gospel, one Saviour, and one Book. I believe that, despite the break up of COCU, the vision of the one Body, the reality of the one Body will continue to illuminate the Churches.

Yet it must not be an imperialistic unity. It must make provision for a vast diversity. We no longer have only two divisions: Jews and Gentiles. We now have fifty kinds of Jews and fifty thousand kinds of Gentiles! Operating within the framework of common sense, and recognizing that urbanization, the mass media and other modern forces are going to merge small, weak homogeneous units into large, strong units. Churches and missions should press forward, making sure that every tribe, kindred, tongue and nation (every homogeneous unit) has growing within it, a vigorous Christian Church. All men should be able to become Christians without feeling that they are betraying their race. I do not want white men to feel that the only way they can follow Christ is in multi-racial and multi-language congregations. I do not want Indians in Guatemala to feel that in order to become Evangelicals they must become Mestizos. I do not want Japanese village people to feel that only traitors to the family become Christian. Cultural diversity must be built into the program of the expanding Church. Only so will church expansion be seen to be not cultural imperialism, but loving service to every homogeneous unity on earth.

An important question, of course, is how much diversity can the Church allow? Let me spend the last few minutes of this paper stating a principle and applying it in one crucial area. The principle is that only those cultural components which are expressly forbidden by the Bible and banned by the New Testament Church should be forbidden and banned as the Church advances on new ground.

The principle is clear. Its applications are difficult. During the next decades missiologists and missionaries, ministers and theologians will debate furiously what applications are correct and biblical and what are not. Let me lift up one application for our consideration.

Tribe and caste are not forbidden by the Bible nor banned by the New Testament Church. On the contrary, the Old Testament tells throughout of God's dealing with and sanction of a thoroughly tribal society. The New Testament, as we have seen, tell of a Jewish Church which remained culturally and ethnically distinct from the Gentile Churches and of Gentile Churches which remained uncircumcised and pig-eating. The New Testament affirms that at the very end, *ta ethne* will be there. (The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the *etene*. (Rev. 22:2) Since all this is beyond question it seems reasonable to propose that one goal of missions is to plant a church in every homogeneous unit, culturally in harmony with that unit, jealously guarding its cultural diversity, and considering the tribe or caste, the clan or other unit one of God's orders of preservation, to be respected till God replaces it.

This application will necessitate rethinking our position on tribe and caste. For most ministers and missionaries -- and for most missiologists too -- tribe and caste have been the great enemy. They were what broke up The Church of Christ and kept men from confessing the Saviour. Tribe and caste were the old idolatrous order, the stronghold of ancestor worship, the fountainhead of ethnic arrogance and hatred. They had to go. A large part of the resistance of most non-Christians to the Gospel arises at just this point.

We should cease equating these social structures with "the enemy." There is no biblical basis for it. Just as the continuation of the white race or the brown race poses no threat to the unity of the Church, so continuation of the Bahutu or the Kamma or the Jewish race poses no threat. The great enemy is hate, lust and idolatry. These must go. But endogamous marriages calculated to keep our people intact? Nothing in Scripture requires Christians to marry across race or tribe or caste lines. I affirm this categorically. My Theology of Missions class, composed of national leaders and career missionaries from many lands, after prolonged searching of the Scriptures (rather reluctantly I must say), agreed that Scripture would allow any Church to practice endogamy, and thus to perpetuate clans and castes and tribes.

As I read the future, homogeneous units are fighting a losing battle against the tide in human affairs. They will eventually go. Larger and

larger racial and linguistic unities appear likely to be seen. But homogeneous units are here now and are likely to be here for a long time. Let the Church disciple each of them out to the fringes, operate within them, preserve the richness of their cultures, as far as it can mitigate the antipathy which rises between bodies of men, and promote love and justice between all men. The Church, working thus with the homogeneous unit not against it, will liberate the multitudinous ethnic units of mankind into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.



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