4-2021

Re-Imagining Ecclesiology: A New Missional Paradigm For Community Transformation

Michael J. Berry

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

RE-IMAGINING ECCLESIOLOGY: A NEW MISSIONAL PARADIGM FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

MICHAEL J. BERRY

PORTLAND, OREGON

APRIL 2021

Portland Seminary
George Fox University
Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

Michael J. Berry

has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on April 29, 2021
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership in the Emerging Culture

Dissertation Committee:

Primary Advisor: W. David Phillips, DMin

Secondary Advisor: Karen Claassen, DMin

Lead Mentor: Leonard I. Sweet, PhD

DEDICATION

To my wife, Andra

and to our daughters, Ariel and Olivia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks for everyone's support and assistance to get me through this process: Dr. Len Sweet, Donna Wallace, Dr. David Phillips, Dr. Loren Kerns, Dr. Clifford Berger, Dr. Jason Sampler, Rochelle Deans, Dr. David Anderson, Dr. Tom Hancock, Patrick Mulvaney, Ray Crew, and especially Tracey Wagner.

EPIGRAPH

The baptism and spiritual formation of a city is not an event. It's a process.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT

This dissertation claims that the church is siloed, disconnected, and disengaged from the communities they are called to serve. The destructive mentalities of a disengaged church may even be complicit in creating and enabling certain community health problems instead of being a part of the solutions. This research is focused on how ecclesiology, ethnography, and epidemiology can be a missional paradigm to improve the gospel's contextualization and work in community transformation. Chapter 1 demonstrates how increasing public health issues such as pandemics, chronic diseases, poverty, homelessness, food deserts, addiction, inadequate health care, gun violence, mass incarceration, racism, and social injustice are larger than any one church can address. In spite of increased public awareness and pleas from the public health community for churches to become actively engaged and provide solutions and resources, the destructive mentalities of a disengaged church may even be complicit in creating and enabling some of these community health problems instead of being a part of the solutions.

Chapter 2 examines how ecclesiology has been based on a mistranslation, a semiotic void, or a deliberate politically motivated translation of the Greek term ἐκκλησία spoken by Jesus on Matthew 16:18, to show how a proper view of ecclesiology can enable congregations to work together as one church in their city. Chapter 3 introduces ethnography to assist congregations in the semiotic reading of their communities, learning the story, context, and culture in order to join God in His *missio Dei* in the neighborhood.

Chapter 4 introduces epidemiology as a system of organized soteriology and eschatology as a means to bring about community wholeness. Chapter 5 presents how contextual intelligence enables congregations to develop cultural competence for contextualizing the gospel. Chapter 6 presents how a church collective is able to take concrete steps in the work of community transformation.

CHAPTER 1

NO CHURCH IN THE WILD: THE CHURCH IS SILOED, DISCONNECTED, AND DISENGAGED

Worsening public health problems (such as pandemics, chronic illness, genetically modified food, food deserts, violence, poverty, homelessness, addiction, a failing healthcare system, racial and political divisions, etc.) are more than any one church can address. In fact, the negligent mentally of well-meaning but misdirected churches is actually detrimental to public health in the communities they are called to serve. Leonard Sweet has rightly pointed out, "The twenty-first Century [sic] church has one of the worst problems any species can have - the failure to be aware of the problem it has, anosognosia, or the ignorance of illness."[1]

According to Duke University's Association of Religious Data Archives, recent studies have shown that only 25.3%[2] of all US congregations have participated in some sort of social service delivery programs, including food and clothing, housing and homelessness, domestic violence, substance abuse, employment, and health programs.[3] Some may find it surprising that among these faith traditions who have been engaged in serving their communities, data shows variety across the theological spectrum with 30.9% as conservative, 21% are moderate, and 16.8% are liberal. Politically, churches

---

[1] Leonard Sweet, *Ring of Fire: Walking in Faith Through a Volcanic Fire* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2019), 8.

[2] "US Charity Work?" The Association of Religion Data Archives, https://www.thearda.com/ConQS/QS_35.asp#D97.

[3] Mark Chaves and William Tsitsos, "Congregations and Social Services: What They Do, How They Do It, and With Whom," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30 no. 4 (December 2001): 660-83.

that were engaged in community charity were 29.9% conservative, 24.5% moderate, and 15.1% liberal.[4] However, what is most important to note is that 74.7% of all US congregations are not engaged in providing assistance to people in need, despite repeated calls from the US Public Health sector.[5] Demographics have shown that among each of these US religious traditions (77.9% are Roman Catholic, 66.4% are white evangelical or fundamentalist, 79.9% are Black Protestant, 75.8% are white liberal or moderate churches), most are not engaged with the community's needs to which they are called to bring health and wellness.[6] The problem addressed in this thesis is to explore how these 74.7% American churches that are siloed, disconnected, and disengaged from the overwhelming problems facing our urban, suburban, and rural neighborhoods can be engaged.

Robert Lewis states, "Spiritual Impact [sic] is rarely contemplated beyond the borders of the church."[7] The current predicament of churches in America requires more than a mere tinkering with long-assumed notions about the identity and mission of the church. Instead, as many knowledgeable observers have noted, there is a need for reinventing and rediscovering the church in this new kind of world.[8] The sad part is that even among those churches working in their communities, they have been using old-

---

[4] "US Charity Work?"

[5] Michelle C. Kegler, Sarah M. Hall, and Mimi Kiser, "Facilitators, Challenges, and Collaborative Activities in Faith and Health Partnerships to Address Health Disparities," *Health Education & Behavoir* 37, no. 5 (October 2010): 665.

[6] "US Charity Work?"

[7] Robert Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 57.

[8] David P. Leong, Street Signs: Toward a Missional Theology of Urban Cultural Engagement (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 57.

world strategies that were shaped in the twentieth century, with some of the deepest convictions of modernity.[9] In order to correct these maleficent issues, this research will investigate the concepts of ecclesiology, ethnography, and epidemiology as a missional paradigm to improve the gospel's contextualization and work in community transformation. This research will show that any concept of a city-wide transformation can only occur when the whole church re-imagines a new kind of ecclesiology for the whole city.[10]

During a conference I attended in 2018, The General Overseer of The Church of God said, "Today's church is totally prepared for the problems of the 1950s."[11] Having pastored for the last 45 years, I wholeheartedly agree with him. Alan Roxburgh states, "We have entered a world for which the churches of North America are woefully unprepared. These churches are, in fact, seeking to address this new, unthinkable world with strategies shaped in the twentieth century."[12]

In Baltimore, Maryland in April 2015, a largely peaceful protest over the death of Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old black man who suffered a spinal cord injury in police custody, gave way to scattered scenes of chaos. As demonstrators smashed a downtown storefront window, threw rocks, bottles, and damaged police cruisers, officers in riot gear

---

[9] Alan Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 11.

[10] Eric Swanson and Sam Williams, *To Transform A City: Whole Church, Whole Gospel, Whole City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 100.

[11] Tim Hill, "Sermon: Beyond the Mist," Lecture at Global Prayer Alliance Gathering, Griffin, GA, November 7, 2018, http://www.gnni.org/2018-venues.html.

[12] Roxburgh, *Missional*, 11.

broke up skirmishes and made twelve arrests near Camden Yards.[13] Recently, Bishop Angel Nuñez, of the Bilingual Christian Fellowship in Baltimore, shared a parallel story of an effort to calm tensions down across the city.[14] Congressman Elijah Cummings, former congressman Kweisi Mfume, and mega-church leader Jamel Bryant met with some of the young leaders who organized and led the protest against the Baltimore police department's brutality. The meeting, as covered by local media, focused on the community leaders as they entered the room. Protesters began to question why these leaders were there. One young person asked, "Who are you to think you are to come in here, with all this press, and mediate with us? You're not here for us, you're just here for the PR. You don't know us, you don't know our neighborhoods, and you care about what happened to Freddie?"[15] This caused me to ask some specific questions. Where has the church been? Why were the churches of the city and city leaders so disconnected from the community? What has happened to the church's influence in bringing about community wholeness?

In Wilmington, Delaware,[16] I interviewed retired city police officer Laymen Grant, who served the Wilmington Police Department for over forty years. I asked him if he knew where the majority of murders were taking place in Wilmington. He answered, "Yes" and told me about the three locations with the highest number of murders. He

---

[13] Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Stephen Babcock, "Scenes of Chaos in Baltimore as Thousands Protest Freddie Gray's Death," *The New York Times*, April 25, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/26/us/baltimore-crowd-swells-in-protest-of-freddie-grays-death.html.

[14] Angel Nuñez, interview by author, Gainesville, GA, March 19, 2017.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Wilmington is an important city to investigate, as it has more murders per year than any other city its size. Abigail Jones, "Murder Town USA (aka Wilmington, Delaware," *Newsweek,* December 19, 2014, https://www.newsweek.com/2014/12/19/wilmington-delaware-murder-crime-290232.html.

stated most of the murders were drug related. I inquired if the churches in those neighborhoods engaged with the communities and partnered together with the police departments to curb the violence in addressing the drug problems? He responded: "No, they are too busy sitting in their buildings, huddling in fear, praying."[17] Robert Lewis states, "[P]opular sentiment increasingly views the church as inconsequential."[18] He continues, "Numerous studies confirm that the public, especially media and intellectual leaders, do not see Christianity as a dominant social force. Instead, six out of ten Americans believe that the church is irrelevant."[19]

Never underestimate nostalgia and its power to idealize.[20] In the past, a cathedral was a living, physical map of the Christian imagination located in city centers.[21] They were designed to help us understand the non-physical world, though they no longer communicate these truths. Because of a flawed understanding of ecclesiology, the church that was once the center of the city has now become a relic of the distant past. "Years ago, the neighborhood church was the place many in America got together and was where they got to know their neighbors. But this model is no longer relevant for many people, so churches have to think creatively about how to help people encounter others and God in their everyday lives."[22]

---

[17] Laymen Grant, interview by author, Wilmington, DE, January 5, 2019.

[18] Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, 23.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Sweet, *Ring of Fire*, 7.

[21] Alan Roxburgh, *Missional Map-making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 8-9.

[22] Jonathan Merritt, "America's Epidemic of Empty Churches," *The Atlantic,* November 25, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/what-should-america-do-its-empty-church-buildings/576592/.

According to Tim Kurtz, "The 'church building' mindset is a containment mindset."[23] Most people today cannot decipher the meanings written into the brick, mortar, carvings, and glass.[24] For ethnographers, many abandoned inner-city church facilities in the American northeastern corridor provide a spiritual map of a city's theological history. This necessitates an answer to the question "Why did the congregation's ministry decline?" Today many inner-city church facilities have become nothing more than a space for benchmark occasions in faith for commuter Christians who no longer live in the neighborhood, providing one explanation for why they are disconnected and disengaged. New York City resident Patricia Rodriguez says, "'You rarely hear of a church opening, It's all about church closings, and that's sad.' On Sunday mornings, the church doors at Our Lady Queen of Angels are locked up tight. Cobwebs frame the rust red doorways. New York's Archdiocese shut down Our Lady Queen of Angels as part of a reorganization that also closed dozens of other parishes."[25]

These places are no longer part of the ways we see or construct the meaning of our lives as postmodern people. The past few years have witnessed a plethora of books addressing the challenges facing the church in the midst of a profound cultural transition.[26] Ray Bakke, an urban ministry expert, shared an important reality of pastoring a church in inner-city Chicago.

---

[23] Tim Kurtz, *Leaving Church Becoming Ekklesia: Because Jesus Never Said He Would Build a Church Kingdom* (Albion, MI: Word Publications, 2017), 24.

[24] Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach the World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 8.

[25] Hansi Lo Wang, "'It's All About Church Closings': Catholic Parishes Shrink in Northeast, Midwest," NPR, September 14, 2015, https://www.npr.org/2015/09/14/436938871/-it-s-all-about-church-closings-catholic-parishes-shrink-in-northeast.

[26] Eddie Gibbs, Foreword to Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, xi.

> When I became a pastor in Chicago, my first community service was the funeral of the neighboring pastor and his wife two blocks down the street from my church. They had been stabbed to death during the night in what is still an unsolved crime. One of their three preschool children stopped the postman at the door the following morning and plaintively asked "Can you wake up daddy?" As I described the situation to my mother later that week, she asked—doubtless of thinking about my little boys—"How long are you going to stay in Chicago?" I replied, "As long as I can count on other believers here. If I can't, I'll run far and fast."[27]

According to FBI data, Chicago murders were up in 2020, outpacing the national increase of murders across the country.[28] While the effects of Chicago's carnage are wide-reaching—devastating families and scarring communities—it also takes a toll on the religious leaders who serve as spiritual guides for those who choose to follow. For many pastors, ministry extends beyond their church walls and into the streets. And as the cycle of bloodshed unfolds, ministers and priests must also bear a portion of the trauma as they comfort families in mourning and eulogize the dead. Their role is often a hybrid of ministry, counseling and activism. "You put yourself out there and try to be a voice for the voiceless, and you put your heart out there," said the Rev. Greg Livingston, who has spent three decades as a pastor on the city's South and West Sides. "You want to connect with that family and their sorrow, so it is a constant for him. And an ever-constant way of putting yourself out there for people. It's a life of sacrifice for those of us who really take it seriously."[29]

---

[27] Ray Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 41.

[28] Chuck Goudie, Barb Markoff, Christine Tressel, Ross Weidner, and Jonathan Fagg, "Chicago Murders Up in 2020, Outpacing National Increase: FBI Data," Eyewitness News, September 17, 2020, https://abc7chicago.com/chicago-murders-2020-crime-fbi/6431761/.

[29] Javonte Anderson, "For Religious Leaders Who Serve Families Affected by Chicago's Violence, the Work Takes a Toll: 'It's A Very Lonely Place,'" *Chicago Tribune*, August 14, 2020, https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-chicago-pastors-violence-response-20200814-hgync2gjdnewdmtvvs6ypfemvq-story.html.

In the next chapter we will explore how Jesus promises to employ his idea of an "ekklesia" (meaning city-wide congregations) that even the "gates of Hell" cannot prevail against it. Yet, in the face of our devolving inner-city communities, is it any wonder, with the cluster of developing problems, why churches have become siloed, disconnected, and disengaged? A siloed church is also evidenced by Christendom's focus on buildings,[30] and the legacy of building programs is visible today when people often refer to buildings as "the church," rather than the theological meaning being the gathering of Christian people or community.[31] Church buildings often become little more than chambers in the neighborhood where the inner inhabitants are comfortable with doors closed. John Perkins commented, "The church has struggled with putting those on the margins in the center of ministry and missional efforts. We have often gotten caught up in a spirit of growth and prosperity at the expense of prioritizing involvement."[32]

Epidemiology, the study of public health and wellness, is not about Christendom—placing Christianity or the Church back at the center of society—but it is more like the leaven of God's kingdom (Matthew 13:33) that is sown into all parts of society and lived out in such a way that it has impact on every sector of the community.[33] As with any other institution, the church is not immune to the loss of confidence in our human ability to come up with solutions to fundamental problems relating to the

---

[30] Michael R. Crudge, "The Disconnected Church: A Critical Examination of the Communication of the Christian Church in New Zealand," (PhD diss., Auckland University of Technology, 2013), 33, https://openrepository.aut. ac.nz/bitstream/handle/ 10292/5922/CrudgeM.pdf?sequence=3.

[31] Crudge, "The Disconnected Church," 33.

[32] Wayne Gordon and John M. Perkins, *Making Neighborhoods Whole: A Handbook For Christian Community Development* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 181.

[33] Swanson and Williams, *To Transform A City*, 47.

environment, a growing world population, the purposeful clash of civilizations, or the technological revolution that has advantaged the privileged (who contribute to and benefit from scientific advances) over those who are excluded from enjoying the benefits (through a lack of education and work skill).[34] However, the church should be attentive as well as aware as every other institution. The proverbial handwriting is on the wall. Our communities are in crisis. We live in a world: (1) that has militarized the public schooling of its children in the inner city; (2) where neighborhood police officers outnumber guidance counselors or nurses; and (3) that has criminalized addiction and throws those addicted into jail with set sentences, jails that are hotbeds of high drug activity and addiction.[35]

According to Leonard Sweet, "God has had it with the church as we know it."[36] The crisis of the church today has little to do with dwindling numbers, aging congregations, outdated facilities, and lace-by-day/leather-by night priests. For Sweet, "Today's church crisis stems from one thing: Jesus deficit disorder." Michael Crudge believes that Christian people sometimes represent the church poorly within society.[37] He sees that the church has become a "disconnected church" through its *modus operandi* that fosters a historical connection to the past era and attitude as Christendom. A disconnected church struggles with the realities of how hard it actually is to be Christian, but they do not embrace the fact that many of the difficulties experienced through a negative

---

[34] Swanson and Williams, *To Transform A City*, 47.

[35] Sweet, Ring of Fire, 7.

[36] Leonard Sweet, *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 22.

[37] Crudge, "The Disconnected Church," 4.

response from society might actually be the result of how the church and Christians are *being* Christian.[38]

Over the last, thirty years I have served as the lead pastor of a hybrid contemporary church in Annapolis, Maryland that was affiliated with both Hillsong and C3 Global Churches based out of Sydney, Australia. Wanting to be culturally relevant, these churches have sought to re-envision the church by experimenting and establishing an attractional model, a new kind of brand. It is a model of church that requires high maintenance, high performance, and high demand, promoting its churches in a way similar to how Starbucks promotes its brand outlined in Howard Schultz's book, *Pour Your Heart Into It*. In his book, he cites that branding and franchising "is a logical route and quick reliable way to raise capital."[39]

Today's ecclesiology has defined success through the rubric of an accounting model, based on the number of attendees, cash, assets, and ability to market itself. Schultz ascertains that branding and franchising "allows you to preempt the competition and enter new markets in a hurry to get ahead of the pack."[40] Revisioning the church, through rebranding and franchising, left out the important aspect of needs analysis. They have not kept up with the real needs of their customers. Ecclesiologist Neil Ormerod points out that the mission of the church should not be conceived simply in terms of social and cultural reproduction, or a numbers game to increase total attendance.[41]

---

[38] Crudge, "The Disconnected Church," xiii.

[39] Howard Schultz, *Pour Your Heart into It: How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time* (New York: Hachette, 1997), 172.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Neil Ormerod, *Re-visioning the Church: An Experiment in Systematic Historical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 364.

In 2015, Rich Wilkerson Jr., the host of Oxygen Channel's "Rich in Faith," asked then Hillsong NYC pastor Carl Lentz, "What was the most important thing to know in starting a church?" Lentz responded, "When we started the church people asked me what are you most scared of? Like the devil? Demonic Attacks?" He continued, "No! Like where do you find good lighting people!"[42] Like any other good, attractional-model church pastor, the most important thing to him for church planting was to focus on the show. The trend of performance mindset has continued with elaborate lighting, sound systems, large screens, media technology, sets, techniques, and music to attract the attention of those invited to the show, with hopes that such accoutrements will lead people to Christ. This maladaptation is failing to meet its own claim to be relevant.[43] This is nothing more than using a preferred sensuality in the building as a means of escape. Vineyard Church founder John Wimber wrote, "I'm concerned the Church has become more of a theatre experience, rather than a meeting place for people to encounter and interact with God."[44] However, scripture says, "The Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says: 'Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. What kind of house will you build for Me, says the Lord, or where will My place of repose be?' (Acts 7:48, Berean Study Bible). In other words, God has left the building.

---

[42] *Rich in Faith*, season 1, episode 4, "Baby It's Cold Outside," produced by Evan Sweldelson. Aired December 24, 2015, on Oxygen Channel Network.

[43] Crudge, "The Disconnected Church," 1.

[44] Rob Buckingham, "Is it Wrong for the Church to Entertain People?" Bayside Church, April 30, 2014, https://baysidechurch.com.au/blog/is-it-wrong-for-the-church-to-entertain-people/. Accessed 12/21/20.

Jesus did not do establishment church, whether classical, contemporary or postmodern.[45] God is not so much dechurching Christianity as He is re-Christianizing the church.[46] According to French philosopher, professor, and noted Christian anarchist, Jacques Ellul, "Jesus is the anti-religion. The whole religious system is undone by Jesus' ministry. The kingdom of God breaks free of religion with Jesus."[47] Ed Silvoso asks:

> If the church is so important, why did Jesus mention it only twice in the gospels? And why is there neither a command nor instructions in the Bible how to plant one? These are intriguing questions that beg new questions, such as how was the New Testament church able not just to survive, but also to radically transform the hostile social and political environs into which it was born? How did it set in motion a process that impacted nations in relatively a short time, without buildings, professional clergy, religious freedom or social status? And why, in comparison, does it appear that the church's influence on social matters today is progressively diminishing?[48]

Dan Kimball says, "If this isn't realized by Christians, they might be too enclosed in their Christian network and subculture to fully see what's happening."[49] He gives examples of change in our times, that church leaders are not respected by people growing up outside the church. Ecclesiastical authorities are not sought out as people to turn to for advice and they are not in the position of influence in communities.[50]

Occasionally, popular culture sentiments toward the church are expressed in art, music, and videos. Great art can be made out of love for religion as well as rebellion

---

[45] Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 22.

[46] Ibid., 19.

[47] "M15 Resurrection Stories," Grace and Peace, accessed December 18, 2020, https://www.graceandpeacemagazine.org/m15-resurrection-stories?id=37.

[48] Ed Silvoso, *Ekklesia: Rediscovering God's Instrument for Global Transformation* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2017), 13.

[49] Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 29.

[50] Ibid.

against it.[51] Music icons Jay Z and Kanye West wrote and recorded a popular song in 2011 entitled "No Church In The Wild." It might be a hard pill to swallow, but the rapper who reminded us that Jesus walks with pimps, hoes, and crack dealers makes a timely revelation: There is "No Church in the Wild."[52] According to Huffington Post Contributor Monica Miller, "No Church in the Wild" is an "existential rejection of organized religion." This song foreshadows the reality of a growing rise of religious non-affiliation in our country. Like many young people today, West critiques organized religion. This song reflects the countless urban youth afflicted by issues of gang violence, homophobia, and class inequality. They have lamented that they do not feel accepted in dominant institutions—the church included.[53] In the music video, a young man prepares a Molotov cocktail to throw at a church that is protected by police.[54]

The church in the video looks like a silo. Independent. Unconnected from everything around it. It is imprisoned by iron bars. There is no way this church could engage with the world.[55] The words of this song seek to dispel the church's illusion of power and reveal the emptiness of our social structures. Stephanie Imani LaFlora says, "This song isn't necessarily bashing God, but organized religion. It's clearly coming from feelings of rejection and hypocrisy from religious institutions and each verse provides a

---

[51] Camille Paggla, "Religion and the Arts in America," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 15, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2007), http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/library/item/11617.

[52] Monica R. Miller, "'No Church in the Wild': The Youth's Unrecognized Spirituality Between Beats and Rhymes," HuffPost, December 6, 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/no-church-in-the-Wild-spirituality-between-beats-and-rhymes_b_1756187.

[53] Miller, "'No Church in the Wild.'"

[54] Kanye West, "No Church in the Wild," May 29, 2012, 5:03, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJt7gNi3Nr4.

[55] Shaun Seaman, "The New Parish Part 2 (Sermon)," Trinity Presbyterian Church, Carp, Ontario, Canada, September 2014, https://trinitykanata.ca/whats-happening/archived-sermons/.

different perspective on the theme."[56] As Shaun Seaman puts it, "There are more than a few who maintain that in fact, the church has become the silos of our society—disengaged from the world, disconnected from the people in their communities and disengaged from the world."[57]

Authors Ron Sider, Phillip Olsen, and Heidi Unruh explain why it is vital to be connected to its neighborhoods. Unless the church connects with the community in vital networks, it will eventually become irrelevant, wither, and die.[58] Most churches do not want to admit that they have ministry silos. But admit it or not, the common natural drift of churches toward silos means that many currently have them.[59] According to the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism, some of the contributing factors that keep the church siloed and disconnected include:

- Denominationalism
- Spiritual Stronghold
- Lack of Vision
- Lack of Leadership
- Theological Perspectives

---

[56] Stephanie Imani LaFlora, "Decoding Hip-Hop's Controversial Lyrics," Urban Faith, November 2011, https://urbanfaith.com/2011/11/decode-the-lyrics-to-jay-z-and-kanye-wests-no-church-in-the-wild.html/.

[57] Seaman, "The New Parish Part 2 (Sermon)."

[58] Ron Sider, Philip N. Olson, and Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002).

[59] Paul Alexander. "6 Symptoms of Church Ministry Silos and Ways to Help Cure This Type of Disunity," Christianity Today, April 12, 2016, https://www.churchlawandtax.com/web/2016/april/6-symptoms-of-church-ministry-silos.html.

- Overwhelming nature of the city: the challenge of addressing systems and/or sectors
- The unwillingness of working with secular and non-Christian entities
- Rhetoric (intellectual agreement) versus action (practical responses)
- The fear of losing members to other churches
- Empire building[60]

Marla Boole believes that

> [a] city can be captivated for Jesus Christ when believers join in a common desire to see God direct their steps and reveal the plans HE has for their city. But we must first lay aside our own goals, plans, and thoughts so that we can hear God's plans and thoughts. The book of Nehemiah shows how a city wall was rebuilt, with each family taking responsibility for their part. In the same way, each church in a city can take responsibility for a part of the city. But for the entire city to be affected, we must link arms and receive the plans and strategies from the Lord. We must work together to accomplish the task—no one church or individual will be able to do the job alone.[61]

This is not the time for the American Church to stick its head in the sand and isolate itself from the myriad of problems its communities are facing. This is the time for the church to find itself, to learn to be itself, and for new panoramas and pathways to address the world's most urgent challenges.[62] From a biblical perspective, "When God builds a city from the ground up (Isaiah 65:17-25) He is concerned about the peace and

---

[60] Lausanne Movement, "Towards the Transformation of Our Cities/Regions (LOP 37)," Occasional Paper No. 37, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2004, 26, https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/towards-transformation-citiesregions-lop-37.

[61] Marla Boole, "Spiritual Mapping Introduction," Kairos Transformation Ministries, accessed December 19, 2020, http://www.kairostransformation.org/apps/articles/web/articleid/14028/columnid/2618/default.asp.

[62] Boole, "Spiritual Mapping Introduction." See also Sweet, *Ring of Fire*, 8.

wholeness of our communities. And what are the key components of the city God is building?

- Public celebrations and Happiness (vv. 17-25)
- Public health for children and aged. (v.20)
- Housing for all (v.21)
- Food for all (v.22)
- Family support systems (v.23)
- Absence of violence (v.25)"[63]

As Alan Roxburgh says, "We need to keep in mind that the world proposed in scripture is about a way of being that attends to the concreteness of everyday life rather than romanticized idealizations of what the church or a culture ought to be."[64] However, the temptation of the church of the future will be to escape, not engage, according to Sweet, when there's an unsafe culture.[65]

There are a few churches and church movements that have been working in the field of community transformation that have based their work on different theories of change, logic models and strategic action plans to address community disparities.[66] A theory of change describes strategies used by an organization to accomplish its goals. Many community stakeholders use a theory of change because it creates a commonly understood vision of the problem(s) and defines overarching, evidence-based frameworks

---

[63] Bakke, A Theology As Big As The City, 81-83.

[64] Roxburgh, *Missional*, 11.

[65] Sweet, *Ring of Fire*, 22.

[66] Arthur T. Dean, *Planning Primer: Developing A Theory Of Change, Logic Models And Strategic and Action Plans*, (Alexandria, VA: CADCA National Coalition Institute, 2001), 11.

to address the problem. The weakness to some of these theories of change is that "one theory or practice" that applies to a community, in which a church is situated, may be different from another community's diversity and will require a different model. Some exemplary work being done by churches using differing models are:

1. **Lead NYC.** through their 10 Zip Codes Project, which has initiated a 10-year "Heartfelt Connector" model that seeks to support, celebrate, and resource the Church's transformational and loving impact in ten of the most vulnerable zip codes across the Metro New York area by providing micro grants to other ministries that focus on feeding the poor.[67] This model focuses on causes that resonate with the existing concerns of large numbers of people at all income levels, and by creating a structured way for these people to connect where none had previously existed.[68]
2. **Movement Day** unites city churches globally and assists them in addressing the spiritual, social, and humanitarian challenges facing their nations, cities, and communities. Movement Day is a catalytic global group of churches and leaders who are highly trained and determined to find solutions to "stubborn facts" like crime, poverty, apathy, failed educational systems, and unemployment plaguing cities across America and the world.[69] In an

---

[67] "10 ZIP Codes Project," Lead.NYC, accessed December 19, 2020, https://lead.nyc/10-zip-codes-project.

[68] William Landes Foster, Peter Kim, and Barbara Christiansen, "Ten Nonprofit Funding Models," Standard Social Innovation Review, Spring 2009, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/ten_nonprofit_funding_models.

[69] "Our Vision," Movement Day, accessed December 30, 2020, https://www.movementday.com/our-vision.

interview with Roger Sutton, Movement Day's UK leader, he stated their model was different from the US Public Health Model. Rather, it was based on moving from a church-based to kingdom-based in terms of leadership development.[70] In his book he writes, "One of the essential hallmarks of a transformational church is for leaders to live up their vision beyond their own patch, parish and local area to the wider picture of the town or city. This is the vision of the God of Jonah, and Nehemiah, it's the heart of Christ as He cries out for Jerusalem, it's the focus of Paul as he travels to all the main cities of the Roman Empire."[71] Like many other Christian Leadership models, Movement Day is based on a "Transformation Leadership" model.[72]

3. **Annapolis Lighthouse Homeless Shelter.** In 1989, The Annapolis Ministerial Association built the Lighthouse Homeless shelter without doing its due diligence to find out if the city needed one or not. The story began years ago, when Rev. Craig Martin, a graduate of UMC Theological Seminary, had been appointed to Calvary Church. After coming to the community from Lima, Ohio, he joined the local ministerial association and presented his idea to the group. With great enthusiasm, the Annapolis area church association adopted the well-intentioned (but misguided) idea and began the project. For many, this place was a celebrated accomplishment for

---

[70] Roger Sutton, interview with author via Skype, Manchester, UK, March 2018.

[71] Roger Sutton, *A Gathering Momentum: Stories of Christian Unity Transforming Our Towns and Cities* (Hertz, UK: Instant Apostle Watford, 2017), 193.

[72] Sarah K. White, "What Is Transformational Leadership? A Model for Motivating Innovation," CIO, February 21, 2018, https://www.cio.com/article/3257184/what-is-transformational-leadership-a-model-for-motivating-innovation.html.

> the church community. However, the shelter has become over-populated and a public health concern. Since the shelter was opened, the homeless migrated to Annapolis from other cities. In a community that seemed to have no homelessness problem, it now finds itself with an overpopulation of homeless people with no long-range plan to resolve the problem created from a well intention program. The Transtheoretical model, which this program is based on, has not solved homelessness as it is idealized.[73]

These and other theories of change that faith-based initiatives use often fall short and have little to do with solving community programs with sustainable and lasting change. However, what research has shown to be a more effective model for change is called the "Public Health Model." The public health approach is a process that is rooted in the scientific method. It can be applied to violence and other health problems that affect populations.[74] It is based on an epidemiological model that attempts to prevent or reduce a particular illness or social problems in a population by identifying risk indicators.[75]

My research will answer the problem discussed in this chapter and will be addressed in Chapter Two, to enable congregations to works together as one church in a city. Chapter Three assists congregations in semiotically reading and understanding the

---

[73] Richard D. Campbell, "The Transtheoretical Method: A Theoretical Application to Homelessness," (Master's thesis, Grand Valley State University, 2006), https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1642&context=theses.

[74] "The Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed January 1, 2021, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/publichealthissue/publichealthapproach.html.

[75] "What Is Public Health?" CDC Foundation, accessed December 19, 2020, https://www.cdcfoundation.org/what-public-health.

history, context, and culture of their neighborhoods. Chapter Four explains how epidemiology is an evidence based public health approach that assists with making neighborhoods whole. Chapter Five provides a foundational understanding of contextualization and the means to improve the gospel's contextualization. Chapter Six contains a new missional paradigm for community transformation. This evidenced-based paradigm is grounded on proven, working strategies that bring people together to identify common problems or goals, mobilize resources, and implement strategies to reach identified goals.[76]

[76] "Chapter 5, Choosing Strategies to Promote Community Health and Development," Community Toolbox, accessed January 1, 2021, https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/promotion-strategies/overview/main.

CHAPTER 2

RE-IMAGINING ECCLESIOLOGY: WHAT IF JESUS NEVER SAID, "I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH"?

Our understanding of how the Christian Church has and currently does function may be based on the mistranslation of a word spoken by Jesus in Caesarea Philippi, a very familiar place to the disciples.

> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They answered, "Some say that you are John the Baptist; others, Elijah; and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He asked them, "But, who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the messiah, the Son of the Living God." Jesus replied, "Simon, Son of Jonah, you are blessed! No human revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven revealed it to you. You are Peter, and I can guarantee that on this rock I will build my church [*εκκλησία*]. And 'the Gates of Hell' will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:13-20, God's Word Translation).

It is in Matthew 16 that the Greek term *εκκλησία* (usually translated "church") is first used in the New Testament. The word is couched within Jesus' conversation with his disciples. It is at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus chose to reveal God's mission (*missio Dei)* to his disciples when he employed the term *εκκλησία*. This crucial dialogue is set against the combined pantheistic alters, shrines, and temples that invoked memories of Israel's idolatrous and exilic past. Here *εκκλησία* is presented as a force, function, and means in community transformation.

What Jesus meant by using the word *εκκλησία* sadly has been shrouded in history for many reasons, some being but not limited to, political motivations, institutional preservation and the interpretation process itself. The shadow knife of misinterpretation cuts across the gradient of every domain of theology and beyond to the secular concerns. It is here that the etiological journey of church as a term, and identity, begins. Due to this

misinterpretation and mistranslation of what happened on that day in Caesarea Philippi, we have inherited a faulty spiritual compass—a faulty GPS that has led to the *εκκλησία* that Jesus intended into becoming a siloed institution. There is a need to investigate the journey, and its map.

What if the truth Jesus posits in his use of the word *εκκλησία* was mistranslated? Was that mistranslation based on a translator's bias? Or was it because of a semiotic void? Perhaps the mistranslation was done with theological or political intent. What does *εκκλησία* really mean*?* What is the origin of the word "church" and why was it chosen to define *εκκλησία?* Would redefining it affect our ecclesiologies? Why does it matter? The term "church" is well established in the English language and part of the very fabric of Christian thinking. It is generally assumed to be a biblical word, but where did it come from, how does it relate to the New Testament, and has the word *εκκλησία* been accurately translated?[1]

The Christian understanding of the concept of church has been based on a mistranslation of the word *εκκλησία.* Because of mistranslation, ecclesiology as a study has devolved into an institutional analysis into what a church is, why it exists, and what it's faith and practice is. Ecclesiology has been concerned primarily with the theological identity of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ. In a secondary and derivative sense, it is also concerned with the identities of particular churches. Evangelical ecclesiology describes the relationship between the gospel and the church,

---

[1] Larry G. Overton, "The Origin of the Word 'Church' (Part I)," last updated 2015, http://larryoverton.com /my-faith/articles/the-origin-of-the-word-church-part-1.

and in particular the way in which the grace of the triune God constitutes the church, as the communion of saints.[2]

The overarching theme of this chapter is that the material presented seeks to rediscover what an ancient Greek ekklesia was in order to respond to an urgent need to rethink the church's missionary nature and its participation in the *missio Dei* in the world.[3] This is vital since there is no single model or image that does complete justice to all the needs and challenges facing the contemporary church. In order to rediscover the church's missional identity and vocation through dialogue with other Christian traditions, ecumenical missional ecclesiology has adopted an incarnational framework for thinking about the church in context.[4]

In order to have a clearer understanding of what ecclesiology is, we will explore how it has been traditionally defined and contextualized throughout the history of the church and why it needs to be re-imaged. Jesus never said he was going to build a new religious institution called 'church' to replace the Jewish synagogue system of his day. He stated that He was going to build an *εκκλησία*, which needs to be accurately defined in light of its original biblical context since all traditional ecclesiology has been based on the misinterpretation of this one word.

---

[2] John Webster, *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 153.

[3] Man Chung Cheung, "The Contributions of Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar to Ecumenical Missional Ecclesiology," (PhD. diss., The University of St. Michael's College, 2012), 2.

[4] See Avery Dulles' classical work, *Models of the Church*, rev. ed. (New York: Images Books, 1987).

It is important to remember that Jesus lived as a Jew among Jews.[5] He did not come to betray or undermine his faith and practice. He prayed in the synagogue, observed Jewish laws (including the dietary laws), and probably wore the fringes on his clothing (*tzitziot* in Hebrew) as required for Jewish men. His earliest followers did the same.[6] In this chapter, research will show how that the "*εκκλησία*" that Jesus promised to establish was a missional paradigm of the imminent intervention in human affairs by the God of the Jews to bring about wholeness in our neighborhoods.[7]

The historical starting point for most Western Christian systematic ecclesiologies emerged from the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation period, as theologians Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin began to question the claims, faith, and practice of the Roman Catholic Church. However, the Reformation of the sixteenth century involved issues far beyond religion. There were social and political issues that provided the engines for these reforms, as well as philosophical issues which engendered these same reforms, all based on variant interpretations of Jesus' words in Matthew 16:13-20 and the use of the Greek word *εκκλησία*.[8] The Protestant Reformation was a direct challenge to Rome's perspective of papal supremacy, apostolic succession, it's hierarchy, and the church's political and social dominance over the nations,[9] resulting

---

[5] "Separation: Synagogue and Church, Jew and Christian," Facing History, accessed January 17, 2021, https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/Ch.2.pdf.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Rebecca Denova, "Jesus Christ," Ancient History Encyclopedia, January 5, 2021, https://www.ancient.eu/Jesus_Christ/.

[8] Kenan Osborne, *A Theology of the Church for the Third Millennium: A Franciscan Approach* (Leiden, NL: Brill Publishers, 2009), 56.

[9] Ibid., 104.

in an ongoing debate on the divine right of kings.[10] All of these ecclesiologies have their foundation in what Jesus said when He questioned his disciples at the administrative center of Herod's Caesarea Philippi.

The Roman Catholic tradition teaches that when Jesus asked his disciples who He was, He was presenting an important Christological perspective affirmed by St. Peter. Rome asserts that during his lifetime, Jesus established His church. He chose the Twelve as the first Bishops with Peter as the first Pope; the church's Bishops are in direct succession to the apostles, which is key to understanding Catholic ecclesiology. In this view, early apostolic authority rests on what is called apostolic succession through the election of any new pope who then serves as the vicar of Christ over the Church and world.

Protestant theologians began to challenge Catholic ecclesiology with four formulations of Protestant ecclesiology based on the work in the foundational writings of Martin Luther, Calvin's *Institutes Of The Christian Faith*,[11] and Philipp Melanchthon's *Loci Communes Rerum Theologicarum*.[12] Ulrich Zwingli argued that the Rome was not the mediator between God and man, that Christ alone was mediator, which led to development of a non-sacramental ecclesiology and the early Anabaptist movements.[13] These theologians argued a detailed ecclesiology is based on God's Word and that the

---

[10] Michael L. Drake, *A King's Bible* (Auckland, NZ: Wycliffe Christian Schools, 2005), 21.

[11] John Calvin, *Institutes of The Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1011-1521.

[12] Charles L. Hill, ed., *The Loci Communes of Philipp Melanchthon* (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1944).

[13] "Ulrich Zwingli," Christianity Today, accessed September 17, 2020, https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/moversandshakers/ulrich-zwingli.html.

Catholic approach to ecclesiology is not based on God's Word but rather on human words.[14] I agree with the view the Reformers posited, that the Scriptures have been properly understood and translated from one language into another without losing the biblical context as understood by the intended original audience's worldview and imagination. However, the Reformation did not go far enough to re-image ecclesiology as invoked by Jesus and New Testament writers.

Systematic ecclesiology has sought the theological reality of what we call church.[15] In re-imaging ecclesiology, we cannot assume that an ekklesia is a church as it has been traditionally taught. The importance of re-imaging ecclesiology is to elucidate how the church can play a major role in addressing the countless problems that confront our cities, communities, and neighborhoods. There are fragmentations of communities, poverty in the midst of wealth, racial tensions, and faceless bureaucracies making poor decisions for local communities.[16] These are not matters of indifference to a church whose mission is to promote the divinely originated solution to the problem of evil.[17] The church (*kuriakon*) should be front and center, leading the way forward in the work of community transformation. This is why we need to have a clear understanding of Jesus' ecclesiology.

---

[14] Osborne, *A Theology of the Church for the Third Millennium,* 64.

[15] Ormerod, *Re-visioning The Church*, 3.

[16] Ibid., 131.

[17] Ibid.

Translation Failures

This research seeks to answer why many local churches became siloed, disconnected from their neighborhood, and alienated from the places where their facilities are located with a goal to reconcile them to the communities around them. Therefore, this inquiry seeks to take into account both the context of the word's use in Matthew 16:13-20 and contextualizing what this word meant when Jesus spoke it. Evaluating the term ekklesia on this basis produces a definition that invokes responsibility and response for those of us who are working to contextualize our faith and practice.[18] Unfortunately, Greek words like *εκκλησία* came to be translated incorrectly for a number of reasons.

Translator Bias

As we approach any principle of interpretation, every translation of the Scripture involves many decisions by the translator(s) about rendering a word from the Bible's original languages of the text into their own mother tongue.[19] In considering any version, however, it must be acknowledged there are times when the translator brings some of her own theological background, perspectives, and bias in producing their work.[20] Scholars are still not sure about the meanings of some texts and the biblical languages do not

---

[18] Tara Caudle, "The Ekklesia as an Assembly that Invokes Response," *Liberty University Journal of Statesmanship & Public Policy* 1, no. 1 (2020): 1.

[19] David M. Carr and Colleen M. Conway, *Introduction to the Bible: Sacred Texts and Imperial Contexts* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell,2010), 7.

[20] Wayne Jackson, "Were the King James Version Translators Biased Toward the 'Faith-Only' Doctrine?" Christian Courier, accessed January 3, 2021, https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/257-were-the-king-james-version-translators-biased-toward-the-faith-only-doctrine.

translate precisely into English.[21] In addition, we have no original, complete manuscripts of any biblical book.

Often translators choose differing texts like the Masoretic text,[22] the Alexandrian Text,[23] or the Caesarean text. Along with these ancient texts, there are several others like The Byzantine text, the Koine text, the Ecclesiastical text, and the Antiochian text.[24] Most often individual translators choose one text to their liking and compare others, using textual criticism to decide the best Hebrew and Greek texts. In each case where the manuscripts disagree with each other, a translator may render a word from the original language into their own language (that is an inaccurate translation) to fit their own bias.

For example, when the King James translators (who based their translation on the Textus Receptus[25]) rendered Acts 2:47 with the words, "such as should be saved," they ignored the Greek present tense form, "are being saved." The KJV thus yields a sense that accommodates the denominational notion of predestination. E. H. Plumptre, one of the translators of the 1881 Revision, noted: "This verse takes its place among the few passages in which the translators [of the KJV] have, perhaps, been influenced by Calvinistic bias."[26]

---

[21] Jackson, "Were the King James Version Translators Biased Toward the 'Faith-Only' Doctrine?" Carr and Conway, *Introduction to the Bible*.

[22] "Masoretic Text," Encyclopedia Britannica, last updated September 20, 2013, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Masoretic-text.

[23] Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), xvii-xxi.

[24] Ibid., 191-92.

[25] Michael W. Holmes, "What Are English Translations of the Bible Based On?" The Society of Biblical Literature, accessed January 3, 2021, http://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/bible-basics/what-are-english-translations-of-the-bible-based-on.

[26] *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible VII* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1959), 16.

Over the last few decades, many Bible translations have been published and older ones revised to improve accuracy, replace obsolete words, correct translation errors, or appeal to different audiences.[27] Many examples of such bias have obscured significant statements about women in leadership in the New Testament. Well known are two words used to describe Phoebe, who delivered Paul's famous letter to the church at Rome. Paul introduced her as a *diakonon* "of the church at Cenchreae" (Rom. 16:1). Tyndale followed the Latin Vulgate by translating the Greek word as "minister," but starting with the GB of 1560 up to the present, translators assumed Phoebe could not have had an official church position, but was a "servant" (KJV, NAS, NIV 1984, ESV, and HCS, , among others). But the RSV of the mid-twentieth century returned to the earlier understanding of Phoebe by transliterating *diakonon* as "deaconess," followed by the NRSV, NLT, and the NIV 2011, among others, which use "deacon" of both men and women.[28]

A translation or paraphrase made by one person is more likely to reveal the individual bias of the translator or person doing the paraphrase.[29] There are a number of translations and paraphrases that were done by one individual. They include translations from James Moffatt, Richard Weymouth, Edgar Goodspeed, J. B. Phillips, Kenneth

---

[27] Dennis J. Preato, "Junia, A Female Apostle: An Examination of the Historical Record," CBE International, April 25, 2019, https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/article/priscilla-papers-academic-journal/junia-female-Apostle-examination-historical.

[28] John R. Kohlenberger III, "Presumption and Bias in Bible Translation," CBE International, August 27, 2014, https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/article/mutuality-blog-magazine/presumption-and-bias-bible-Translation.

[29] Don Stewart, "How Should a Person Choose a Bible Translation? Which Bible Translation Is the Best?" Blue Letter Bible, last modified July 18, 2018, https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/stewart_don/faq/bible-translations/question8-how-should-a-person-choose-bible-translation.cfm.

Wuest, and the Berkley New Testament. One-person paraphrases include Kenneth Taylor's the *Living Bible* and Eugene Peterson's *The Message*. A translation or paraphrase made by one person is more likely to contain the individual biases of the translator or person doing the paraphrase. Indeed, an evaluation of these works will find this to be the case in each one of them.[30] One recent controversy that has arisen in recent years is over Brian Simmon's *The Passion Translation*. According to Simmon, his work is "a new, heart-level translation that expresses God's fiery heart of love to this generation using Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic manuscripts, merging the emotion and life-changing truth of God's Word." In his own words, he admits, "This is not really a translation."[31] Simmon's view is that

> [t]ranslation is an art, not a science. Are we really accurately translating something if we're leaving out the heart, the passion and the love behind it? I have found a number of times the default for Bible translators has not been to express that heart of love. For example, John 15 speaks of "every branch in me that doesn't bear fruit I will take away." Any Greek student knows that the verb "take away" can also be translated "lift up." So that's how we've chosen to translate it. The Lord Jesus will lift up a fruitless branch and haven't we all been through a fruitless season where we needed to be lifted up?[32]

Simmons himself described his own knowledge of the biblical languages openly, saying, "I had minimal background in biblical languages, so yeah it was something, honestly, it was something the Lord has really helped me with."[33]

---

[30] Stewart, "How Should a Person Choose a Bible Translation?"

[31] Andrew Wilson, "The Passion 'Translation' Debate: Brian Simmons Responds," Think Theology, April 8, 2016, https://thinktheology.co.uk/blog/article/the_passion_translation_debate_brian_simmons_responds.

[32] Sam Hailes, "The Passion Translation: Dr. Brian Simmons Responds to His Critics," Premier Christianity, May 2018, https://www.premierchristianity.com/Past-Issues/2018/May-2018/The-Passion-translation-Dr-Brian-Simmons-responds-to-his-critics.

[33] Jonathan Welton, "Jonathan Welton Interview with Brian Simmons," Reading the Passion Bible, July 22, 2017, http://readingthepassionbible.com/jonathan-welton-interview/.

With this in mind, it is important when reading, studying a transliteration or translation of a text we need to explore any theological or personal bias brought into the translation process.

Mistranslation Due to Semantic Void

For the most part, the New Testament was written in Athenian Classical Greek. It is probable that Jesus knew the three common languages of the cultures around him during his life on earth: Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek. From this knowledge, it is likely that Jesus spoke in whichever of the three languages was most suitable to the people He was communicating with. As a Hellenistic Jew, when Matthew wrote his gospel in the language of the empire—Greek—he may have understood the semiotic voids between the Hebrew and the Septuagint. Jennifer Eyl explains that English translations often mistranslated some words because of Greek-to-English semantic voids on the part of the translators.[34] "By its nature, translation is an inexact thing; it necessarily misses its mark, and the success of a translation is measured by not whether it hits the mark (which it cannot do), but by degrees of proximity to that mark."[35] Although translation seeks equivalence between two languages, it is often the case that a concept in the source language does not exist in the target language, or vice versa.[36]

A few years ago, my daughter and I attended a linguistic seminar on translating modern Hebrew into English at The Bible Museum in Washington, D.C. Spoken in

---

[34] Jennifer Eyl, "Semantic Voids, New Testament Translation, and Anachronism: The Case of Paul's Use Of Ekklesia," *Method And Theory in the Study of Religion* 26, no. 4 (November 2014): 315-39.

[35] Ibid., 316.

[36] Ibid., 317.

ancient times in Palestine, Hebrew fell into disuse and was supplanted by the western dialect of Aramaic beginning about the 3rd century B.C. The language continued to be used as a liturgical and literary language, however. It was revived as a spoken language in the 19th and 20th centuries and is the official language of Israel.

Because Hebrew fell into disuse, the lecture focused on the need and history for Israeli linguists to create new Hebrew words that had been lost in time. One example that was presented dealt with the Hebrew word for cat. Modern Israeli Hebrew did not have a word for 'cat.' So, Israeli linguist created a new word for 'cat' by taking some letters from the Hebrew alphabet and combining it with some Yiddish. Unfortunately, when the new Hebrew word is translated into modern English, the modern Hebrew Israeli language creates a new semiotic void. When they properly translated the new Hebrew word for cat into English it meant 'alien.' This is an example of a semiotic void.

For Eyl, the bridging of Greek-to-English translation work is a consistent problem that frustrates advancements in New Testament studies and in studies of the religions of the Roman Empire more generally.[37] Readers of the New Testament sometimes find it difficult not to impose their own perspective onto the meaning of the text. One immediately thinks of what certain terms mean in a modern-day context. For example, most contemporary English Bible versions translate ἐπίσκοπος as "overseer" or "elder" instead of "bishop." The linguistic void is encountered when the target language shares a

[37] Eyl, "Semantic Voids, New Testament Translation, and Anachronism," 317. This essay addresses the problem of theologically infected English choices of the New Testament, and how those translations come to bear in theologically scholarship on Christian beginnings. As a case study, Eyl examines the ubiquitous rendering of *ekklesia* as church in Paul's letters. She argues that Paul was not referring Christian churches, but to the "Day of the *Ekklesia*" in the Septuagint, when God's people gathered at Sinai/Horeb in Exodus 19-20.

concept with the source language, but does not have that concept reduced down to a single, compressed designator (or word).

For example, English speakers understand the idea of taking delight at another's misfortune, but we do not have a word like *schadenfreude.* This is a linguistic void between German and English. The Japanese have a saying: "The misfortunes of others taste like honey." The French speak of *joiemaligne*, a diabolical delight in other people's suffering. In Hebrew, enjoying other people's catastrophes is *simcha la-ed*; in Mandarin, the term is *xìng-zāi-lè-huò*. Earlier still, the Greeks described *epichairekakia* (literally *epi*, over, *chairo*, rejoice, *kakia*, disgrace). "To see others suffer does one good," wrote the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. "To make others suffer even more so. This is a hard saying, but a mighty, human, all-too-human principle.[38] These are examples of what is meant by a semantic void in the translation process.

Mistranslation to Support Theological Presuppositions

Scott McKnight writes, "The politics of Bible translation is a sad case of colonizing the Bible for one's agenda."[39] In fact, "The Bible you carry is a political act. By 'Bible,' I mean the Translation of the Bible you carry is a political act. Because the Bible you carry is a political act the rhetoric about other translations is more politics than it is reality."[40] Many translators and scholars are aware of the differences found in

---

[38] Tiffany Watt Smith, "Not Just a German Word: A Brief History of Schadenfreude," LitHub, November 21, 2018, https://lithub.com/not-just-a-german-word-a-brief-history-of-schadenfreude/.

[39] Scot McKnight, "The Politics of Bible Translations," Patheos, October 1, 2014, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2014/10/01/the-politics-of-bible-translations.

[40] Ibid.

various translations of the Bible, where the Greek word ekklesia was improperly translated into English using the word "church" instead of its proper translation as "congregation or assembly."

In an age when Catholic priests were often unfamiliar with the Scriptures, Ulrich Zwingli became enamored with it after purchasing a copy of Erasmus's New Testament Latin translation.[41] After reading the translation in 1513, he began teaching himself Greek. Upon leaving the priesthood, Zwingli attained an influential position in the major Swiss city of Zurich, and from there continued to preach reform. He also became heavily involved in Swiss politics. In January of 1523, Zwingli presented his *Sixty-seven Articles* to Zurich's city council. In them, he argued for a new system, a reform of Christianity, and essentially, a break with the Catholic Church.[42] For Zwingli, salvation came through faith alone. Human works didn't count for anything. Moreover, everything a Christian needed to know came from the Bible. Catholic tradition was unnecessary and unhelpful.[43] He believed that he was restoring the church to the "purity" of the church of the first apostles, which became a thrust in Swiss Protestant/Catholic debates and emerging ecclesiologies that centered on the question of what was the "one, true, holy apostolic church."

As a result, Zwingli soon found himself in a political position at odds with Charles V, who had made an alliance with the Pope. In one 1524 work titled *Whoever*

---

[41] Christianity Today, "Ulrich Zwingli."

[42] "Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin: History, Importance & Impact," Study.com, video lesson, 7:33, accessed September 17, 2020, https://study.com/academy/lesson/ulrich-zwingli-and-john-calvinl-history-and-philosophy.html.

[43] Study.com, "Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin."

Gives Rise to Rebellion,[44] Zwingli sought to give the Reformation a clear direction. He taught that a right knowledge of God's Word affects love. The life of someone who hears the Word of God grows "to be equable with God's Word." This is also relevant in terms of relating to an opponent. "I do not want to achieve anything hereby, other than that people do not rob the Pope of his power out of hate, but rather out of love to God and to their neighbors."[45] Zwingli became convinced that the only way to stop the advancement of the papacy was to defend the Word of God through war.[46] What began as "questions" surrounding the ecclesiology of the Catholic Church moved Zwingli into a political debate and war that eventually led to his death on a battlefield. But before he died in that war, he translated the Bible into the Swiss language with the help of Leo Jud, Zwingli's life-long friend, in order to ensure both political and social reform would take root in his culture.[47]

During the Protestant Reformation and The Roman Catholic counter-Reformation, political and social reform became one of the primary reasons for translating the Bible carefully to ensure the political and societal voices during the sixteenth century.[48] As a result, careful word choices in the translation process would be selected to influence the Christian politico-religious community in support of a

---

[44] Peter Opitz, "The Authority of Scripture in the Early Zurich Reformation (1522-1540)," Zurich Open Repository and Archive, 2011, https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/65837/7/ZORA65837akz.pdf, 8.

[45] Ibid.

[46] "Ulrich Zwingli: The 1531 Zurich Bible," Insight of the King, accessed September 16, 2020, https://www.insightoftheking.com/ulrich-zwingli-and-the-1531-zurich-bible.html.

[47] "Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation," Online Library of Liberty, accessed September 17, 2020, https://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/zwingli-and-the-swiss-reformation.

[48] David K., "Bibles of the Reformation," Presbyterian Historical Society, October 6, 2016, https://www.history.pcusa.org/blog/2016/10/bibles-reformation.

geopolitical view. This became a primary motivation in the emergence, development, and support of Western Church ecclesiologies during the sixteenth century and beyond.

As priests and churches began to break away from Rome, new ecclesiologies began to emerge. Within these new expressions of faith, Bible translations supported their faith claims, liturgies, books of prayer, and commentaries of the reformers.[49] The first printed Bible in English was translated by William Tyndale in 1526. Tyndale rendered the Greek word *εκκλησία* as congregation instead of the word church. He likely had political reasons for choosing this word since his translation was forbidden and he was later executed for not recanting his work. It is possible that Tyndale did not want to underscore the authority of the Church, in his own cultural context, by reading it into the New Testament. With the printing of the KJV, the term "church" was regularly used as a translation for *εκκλησία*.[50] In fact, church is now used in almost all English translations and has become the basis for ecclesiology in the Western World.

England and the King's Bible

Out of concern over divisions within the state Church, the ongoing tensions with the Papacy, and the Puritan threat undermining his position on The Divine Right of Kings, King James I sought to consolidate his church and the commonwealth under the Uniformity Act of 1549, with its subsequent minor revisions in 1549, and under his reign

[49] "Swiss Reformation," History of Switzerland, accessed September 17, 2020, http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/reformation-switzerland-calvin.html.

[50] Eyl, "Semantic Voids, New Testament Translation, and Anachronism," 323.

in 1604.[51] When King James I took the throne, having been a King who hailed from Scotland where Presbyterianism had made such inroads, the question emerged as to whether or not the episcopacy itself be abolished in the Church Of England.[52] However, James hated both Puritans and the Presbyterian movement to reform the Church of England. The most popular English Bible in the new king's England was the Geneva Bible (GB), which included marginal notes that were too Protestant for the king's liking.[53] As a result, the King ordered a new translation in order to secure both ecclesiastical power and political power over those who were attempting to bring reform to the church and monarchy. The translators of this new Bible, which would become the KJV, identified those who were engaged in the attempted reforms as Catholics, Puritans, and Baptists. To be sure, the KJV did not arise in a vacuum. It was written and imposed on the people of England at the king's command to solve a political crisis.[54]

So, how did the translators of the English translations of the Bible come to select the word *church* as the translation for *εκκλησία*? Larry Overton states,

> Etymologist generally agree that the English term, *church,* is derived from the middle English and Old English form, which in turn were derived from other Germanic european languages. Ultimately, the etymology of the word *church* is a transliteration from another ancient Greek adjective - **"κυριακός"** which means (belonging to the Lord). The Greek word *kuriakos* from which our English word *church* is transliterated is found just two times in the New Testament. And the

---

[51] "Book of Common Prayer," Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified September 18, 2017, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Book-of-Common-Prayer#ref196257.

[52] Timothy Berg, "The Coming of King James and the Millenary Petition," King James Bible History, May 11, 2020, https://kjbhistory.com/the-millenary-petition-and-its-connection-to-the-hampton-court-conference/.

[53] David Daniell, *The Bible in English* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 429ff.

[54] Drake, *A King's Bible,* 12.

> contexts of these two passages have nothing to do with the idea of a building, a worship service, a congregation or denomination.[55]

Properly translated it means, "pertaining to the Lord or belonging to the Lord." Why, then, did the word "church" get associated with the ideas of buildings, a worship service, congregational, or denominational ecclesiologies? Anglican translators who were mostly Anglo-Catholic and biased toward Anglicanism translated various Greek words into English throughout the NT in order to support the political debate in favor of the Divine Right Of Kings and colonization advanced by the English monarchy in the early seventeenth century.[56] "King James I ordered a new translation of the Bible in order to secure his ecclesiastical and political power in order to solve a political crisis posed by, according to the translators, Catholics, Puritans, and Baptists over who should have authority and what reform measures should be taken in The National State Church."[57] Although the Anglican Church had The Bishop's Translation and the GB, King James I wanted to consolidate the faith as one church with a new translation of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer.[58] The Church's divisions at the time could be broadly categorized into the following five groupings.

The first group could be labeled High Church Arminians.[59] This segment was in favor of keeping the Anglican Church focused toward a Roman Catholic ecclesiology, with a mystical faith, sacramental theology, liturgy and use of The Bishop's Translation

---

[55] Overton, "The Origin of the Word 'Church' (Part I)."

[56] Drake, *A King's Bible*, 7.

[57] Ibid., 12.

[58] Ibid., 13.

[59] Edgar Newgrass, *An Outline of Anglo-American Bible History* (London: B.T Batsford, 1958), 27.

combined.[60] The second group were Calvinistic Puritans who wanted to reform and purify the church toward Calvin's theology, ecclesiology, and use of the GB.[61]

The third group were Non-Conforming, Separatist, Puritans.[62] This faction held to the view that the Anglican Church could not be reformed and that Jesus Christ only was the head of the true church. They were committed to the GB, the singing and reading of Psalms, the teaching of God's word, and promulgation of the gospel into foreign lands. They were deserters of the King's political authority over the church.[63]

Non-Separating Congregationalist comprised the fourth group.[64] They emphasized the right and responsibility of each properly organized congregation to determine its own affairs, without having to submit these decisions to the judgment of any higher human authority and, as such, called for the elimination of bishops and presbyteries.[65]

The final group were Presbyterian Anglicans. This group was comprised of Puritans who conformed to the Book Of Common Prayer.[66] They wanted the episcopally-governed Church of England to adopt the Presbyterian system of church government.

---

[60] Drake, *A King's Bible,* 13.

[61] Michael Raymond Bradley, "The Puritans of Virginia: Their Influence on the Religious Life of the Old Dominion, 1607-1659," (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1971), 13.

[62] Bradley, "The Puritans of Virginia," 15.

[63] Drake, *A King's Bible,* 14.

[64] Bradley, "The Puritans of Virginia," 18.

[65] Daniel T. Jenkins, "Congregationalism: Protestant Movement," Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified March 26, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Congregationalism.

[66] Jenkins, "Congregationalism: Protestant Movement," 22.

It is important to note that the Anglican "Church" has been the official State Church of England and was viewed, in its own conception, as a single, united national church under the authority of the monarch as constructed under the Uniformity Acts of 1549. For the monarchy, the Church needed to be a single combined body of all believers under one organized structure and leadership with very little variation. As a result, King James produced his KJV translation, along with the Book of Common Prayer in 1604, due to both his political and ecclesiological views.[67]

The King's Bible did not gain universal approval. One of the most outspoken critics was Hugh Broughton, an English scholar and Puritan theologian (1549-1612) who published a vicious attack on the final product. He wrote, "Tell his majesty I had rather be rent in pieces by wild horses than that any such translation by my consent should be urged upon poor churches. It crooseth me and I require it to be burnt . . . . who bade them to put the error in the text and the right in the margin"[68] Why did he and others at the time view this new Bible as containing "gross errors?"

Instructions to the Translators[69]

When the KJV project started in 1604, Archbishop Richard Bancroft was appointed the principal overseer. To help start the project, King James wrote to Bancroft with a list of suggested instructions of his own. The king's letter to Bancroft still exists in

---

[67] Drake, *A King's Bible,* 14.

[68] Lewis Lupton, *History of the Geneva Bible,* Vol. 25 (London: Olive Tree, 1994), 89.

[69] The King James Bible, "Instructions to Translators."

the library at Lambeth Palace. As the project manager, Bancroft issued the instructions to the translators.[70]

James was well educated and trained in Classical Greek. He understood the original languages of Scripture. He gathered several scholars to tackle the task of translating the Bible to directly reinforce his governing authority over both Church and State. The translators, having access to many different manuscripts, were clearly focused on producing the most accurate Bible that the evidence before them allowed. However, both the king and the translators of the KJV made it very clear that their intention was to overthrow the old Protestant Bible and to suppress the Puritan faith.[71]

James himself hated the GB because it authorized the overthrow of an unjust ruler. Reference to this could be found in the extensive marginal note to Exodus 4:19. James claimed divine right to rule. He believed God had instituted him as king and no authority could overthrow him.[72] The importance of this issue should not be underestimated: throughout the entire period in which the KJV was being translated, James was engaged in a bitter struggle with Parliament over his demands for absolute power to rule.[73] So long as the GB existed, it had the potential to support or foment insurrection.

At the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, he reportedly said, "No Bishops - No King!" He was completely vested in the hierarchical system in the Church of England, of

---

[70] "Instructions to Translators," The King James Bible, accessed September 14, 2020, http://thekingsbible.com/Library/InstructionsToTranslators.

[71] Drake, *A King's Bible,* 22.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

which he was recognized as having authority over all the bishops and priests serving the churches.[74] Because the prime function of the king's version of the Bible was to affect a political and ecclesiastical peace, the King gave the translators instructions that directly affected the use and the principles of interpretation applied.[75]

One of those instructions explicitly directed them to mistranslate deliberately the Greek word "ekklesia." He instructed, "The old ecclesiastical words to be kept, as the word 'church' not be translated 'congregation.'"[76] The proper English translation of the word as a "civic assembly" would be a direct threat to his view on the Divine Right of Kings. Therefore, he ordered them to replace "ekklesia" with an old ecclesiastical Scottish word "Kirk," which translated into English as the word "church." This was intentionally different than how the Geneva Bible, as used by English Puritans, translated the term as "civic assembly or congregation." This contradicts the commonly understood task of a translator, which is to convey the meaning of a message in an original receptor language.[77]

In the translation of text, most translators agree that their task is to communicate the message so that the meaning that would have been understood by the readers of the original language will be understood by the readers of the receptor language.[78] However,

---

[74] Kurtz, *Leaving Church, Becoming Ekklesia*, 61.

[75] Drake, *A King's Bible,* 23.

[76] Ibid., 22.

[77] James R. White, *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Qur'an* (Grand Rapid, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 2013), 52.

[78] John Beekmand and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), 20.

because of these instructions, the translators who supported James' goals to suppress Puritan theology purposely translated this new Bible to support the episcopacy, apostolic succession, ritualism, and use of the cathedrals' mystical buildings inherited from pre-reformation Catholicism.[79]

David Daniell argues that the older English translation of the KJV, in what he calls "looking back," was used for three reasons: (1) to reinforce traditional Anglicanism; (2) to reinforce, by its Latin constructions, the reliability of Latin tradition, especially as expressed in the Vulgate; and (3) of increasing, as it was thought, in relationship to its structures, theology, and forms of worship, is commonly understood as a distinct Christian tradition.[80] Another major word translated in the GB as congregation or assembly (from the Greek word *εκκλησία* or ekklesia*)* was redefined as "the Church" by the KJV translators. *Congregation* and *assemblies* were the accepted as accurate translations before this time, but were rejected because KJV translators knew James' agenda for the Church.

The problem of bias, semantic void, and purposeful mistranslations to support theological or political views in the receptor culture is challenging enough for historians and religious studies scholars who have much evidence at their disposal.[81] The problem with these inaccuracies and other contributing factors, especially in the field of ecclesiology (i.e., theology, soteriology, eschatology, varied biblical interpretations and social cultural influences on churches, etc.) created a major misunderstanding of what an

---

[79] Drake, *A King's Bible,* 29.

[80] Daniell, *The Bible in English,* 441ff.

[81] Eyl, "Semantic Voids, New Testament Translation, and Anachronism," 315.

"ekklesia" is and what ecclesiology actually is. A brief survey of recent literature in the field of traditional ecclesiology would be enough to convince any reader that the topic comes in various shapes and sizes. Compared with other theological topics, it seems less clear what it is that ecclesiology, and especially systematic ecclesiology, seeks to achieve.[82] It is important for the classical Greek term *εκκλησία* to be understood clearly since it provides an important foundation for the church's work in community transformation.

Recently, Os Hillman interviewed a British journalist who studied the impact of the Church on the local culture of an American city with the highest index of church attendance. Taking into account crime, racism, poverty, and other social factors, the study found that the city ranked among the lowest in the nation as far as the quality of life. When this journalist asked a group of pastors in that city to comment on the study, they replied, "Those things do not concern us. We are spiritual leaders."[83] What we do know in studying the terms *εκκλησία* and *εκκλησιολογία* is that it caused both leaders and many churches to focus inwardly and contributed to their ministries becoming siloed, disconnected, and disengaged from the communities. By clearly defining what Jesus meant when He used the Greek word "ekklesia" in Matthew 16:18, we will provide the binary framework for thinking about early Christian identity as a community and its posture toward the polis (city) they were called to serve.[84]

---

[82] Ormerod, *Re-visioning The Church*, 1.

[83] Os Hillman, "Reclaiming the Seven Mountains of Culture, Part 1," Eternal Leadership, November 5, 2018, https://eternalleadership.com/244-2.

[84] Richard Last, "Ekklesia Outside the Septuagint and the Demos: The Title of Greco-Roman Associations and Christ Followers' Groups," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 4 (2018): 959-80.

Approaches in Ecclesiology

In order to orient the reader, it might be helpful to chart the waters of ecclesiology and provide an orientation for navigation into the three areas of Systematic Ecclesiology: (1) Traditional Ecclesiology; (2) Historical Greek Ecclesiology; and (3) Biblical Ecclesiology as understood within Second Temple Judaism. The word ecclesiology comes from two Greek words, *εκκλησία* (congregation or assembly) and *λογια* (the study of something). The New Testament uses the Greek word *εκκλησία* approximately 114 times. Even though it has been mistranslated from the Classical Greek into English as the word *church*, an *ekklesia* is not a *kuriakos* (church) and church (*kuriakos)* is not an *ekklesia*. They share a common meaning, however, as we will discover, these terms are not synonymous. Instead, they are quite different in meaning and are derived from different origins.[85] Improper translation has distorted the Biblical truth of Christ's "ekklesia."[86] By studying the origin and usage of the term *εκκλησία***,** we will be able to discover what Jesus actually meant by "Upon this rock I will build my *ekklesia*" (Matthew 16:18) and the critical difference between a *kuriakos* and *ekklesia*.

Roman Catholic ecclesiologist Avery Dulles' book, *Models of the Church*, has been described as the most influential English-language study of Catholic ecclesiological paradigms. He describes five models for the Church: the Church as Institution, the Church as a mystical union, the Church as Sacrament, the Church as Herald, and the Church as Servant. The questions this work seeks to address is, "What does ecclesiology

---

[85] Bob Becker and Mary Lou Becker, "Does 'Ecclesia' Mean 'Church'? Confusion in Christendom," Bible Bonanza, accessed June 18, 2020, http://www.biblebonanza.com/ecclesia.html.

[86] Ibid.

seek to achieve? How would it operate?" However, ecclesiology does not provide a blueprint about what being a church is. Instead, it provides a methodology to discern how to participate in the *missio Dei*. According to Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "The Church is called to challenge the prevailing thought forms and its questionable philosophical foundation."[87]

Missional Church ecclesiologist Allan Hirsch poses some important thoughts in exploring the question "How did the early Christians do it?" They were an illegal religion throughout this period. They did not have any church buildings as we know them. They did not even have the scriptures as we know them. They did not have an institution or professional form of leadership normally associated with it. They did not have seeker sensitive services and they actually made it hard to join the church."[88] Many troubles today that have resulted in churches not being engaged in their neighborhoods comes down to a problem of an inaccurate understanding of ecclesiology.

Traditional Ecclesiology

Traditional "Ecclesiology," as it emerged in the sixteenth century, has been presented as pertaining to the nature of the Church.[89] As a theological study, its intent has been to define what the church is. Little interest is spent defining the church's relationship to its culture. It is clear that the church today is facing a variety of near

---

[87] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 158.

[88] Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 18-19.

[89] Charles Pope, "What Is Ecclesiology and Why Is It So Important Today? Community in Mission, September 7, 2014, http://blog.adw.org/2014/09/wrong-church-wrong-pew/.

unsolvable problems regarding self-understanding and what challenges it faces internally. However, a clear definition what Jesus meant when he used the word *εκκλησία* provides us the binary framework for thinking about mission as the overarching concept for ecclesiology.[90] The church is understood as God's visible instrument for His saving purpose towards the πόλις ("city") they were called to serve.[91]

As an academic discipline, traditional ecclesiology has been an attempt by ecclesiologists to explain how local churches and denominations have organized their faith and practice around these various theologies and dogmas. Traditional ecclesiology has played a more peripheral role in Protestant theology (as compared to Catholic); however, Gregory Baum reminds us that in every period of church history, ecclesiologies emerge to address concrete problems faced by the Church.[92] Even though these contributions in the field ecclesiology offer insight into how both denominational and non-denominational function, Robert Webber believes that it is common to think of ecclesiology in terms of six discernable paradigms of time in the complex history of the Western Church: Primitive Christianity (The First Century); the common era, with the emergence of classical Christianity (100-600); the Medieval Era, with the formation of two distinct expressions of the church—Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christianity (600-1500); the explosion of the Reformation and growth of Protestantism

---

[90] Emil Brunner's well-known observation is suggestive of this position: "Mission work does not arrise from any arrogance in the Christian Church; mission is its cause and its life. The church exists for mission as fire exists for burning. Where there is no mission, there is no church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith." See Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London: SCM Press, 1931), 108.

[91] Last, "Ekklesia Outside the Septuagent and the Demos."

[92] Gerard Mannion and Lewis S. Mudge, eds., *Routledge Companion to Ecclesiology: The Church in a North America Perspective* (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2008), 326-40.

(1500-1750); the Modern Era, with the growth of denominations (1750-1980); and the post-modern now emerging (1980-).[93]

Traditional ecclesiology has been defined as the analytical and constructive study of a church's identity or a self-understanding of the Christian Church in its variety of forms and practices. As an academic discipline, traditionally, it originates in dogmatics.[94] It has been an institutional analysis focused on the doctrines of the church, her being, ministry, mission, and worship. It developed as a theology that has been applied to the nature and structure of its organizational developments with emphasis on rites, art, liturgy, church architecture as sacred space and placement of church furniture. The faith and practice of any church begins with its theology and understanding of salvation. It has been a key focus in Christian theology since the first days of the church. Theologians from Augustine and Barth have debated the finer points of salvation and its relationship to culture for a long time, offering a bewildering array of competing and often contradictory theories.

Traditional ecclesiology has its roots in diverse Christian theologies of salvation and have emerged in an attempt to answer the church's own relationship to cultural questions, tracing doctrines of salvation from the first century into the twenty-first century.[95] By illuminating the ways in which doctrines of salvation have evolved over the church's history we can learn how these important views take shape in a local church's

---

[93] Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Post-Modern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 13.

[94] Sven-Erick Brodd, "Ecclesiology," in *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions*, ed. Anne L Runehov and Lluís Oviedo Runehov (Berlin: Springer Link, 2013), 24.

[95] Ormerod, *Re-visioning The Church*, 130.

faith and practice in a community or neighborhood. Contextualizing a theology is determined by how they see God, how they see themselves, how they see others, and how they order their world. Traditional ecclesiology is often a comparative focus that provides a much-needed map of the different theologies of salvation and how they have contributed to the art, rites, rituals, liturgies, architecture and arrangement of church furniture, right down through the traditional histories of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant faiths.

Applying the Wesleyan quadrilateral (Scripture, reason, experience, and tradition) as a methodology for theological reflection will help identify a church or denomination's basic institutional thinking and soteriology. How a church worships and how it makes Christ known is predicated on its ecclesiology and understanding of what it means to be a church. These ecclesiologies have shaped how congregations contextualize their faith around what traditional ecclesiology has reiterated since the 16th Century.

Historical Greek Ecclesiology

Historical Greek ecclesiology begins with defining the Greek word *εκκλησία,* as understood in its original Athenian cultural context and properly translating it from this Greek context into English. The word ekklesia is a governmental word, not a religious one, and the term should not be employed to describe a church. Historical ecclesiology, rooted in the use of the Greek word *εκκλησία*, is a based on the term ἱστορία (historia) meaning "inquiry; knowledge acquired by investigation" in the study of Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle. Aristotle believed citizenship was constituted by the right of political

equals to rule and to be ruled in turn.[96] The importance of the Greek contextual use of the word ekklesia cannot be overstated, as the Greek context heavily influences and informs the biblical context and usage. In the Greek context, ekklesia is primarily a political civic assembly.[97] Historically the military assembly is the origin of the Greek *εκκλησία.*[98]

This Greek political usage of the word predates the biblical usage in both the Septuagint and the New Testament.[99] The ekklesia is recognized as the key to Athenian democracy and was the most authoritative body with Greek culture, which mandated its citizens to participate in public life. In the wider Greek culture, the word ecclesia meant a duly convened assembly of citizens. Literally, it was the "called out ones" but with a special meaning to be summoned, to convene together, judge, and vote on political matters. It was a democracy with the slogan of "freedom and equality" for all its citizens. Ekklesia is the term used for the assembly in Greek city-states, including Athens. The ekklesia was a gathering where all citizens could speak their minds and try to influence one another in the political process.

The purpose of the ekklesia was civic.[100] During Jesus' time, the ekklesia, in legal cooperation with the Roman Senate, had the final decisions in all matters affecting the supreme interests of the state, as to war, peace, alliances, treaties, the regulation of army and navy, finances, loans, tributes, duties, prohibition of exports or imports, the

---

[96] Caudle, "The Ekklesia as an Assembly that Invokes Response," 4.

[97] Ibid., 2.

[98] Young-Ho Park, *Paul's Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly: Understanding the People of God in Their Political-Social World* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 10.

[99] Moises Silva, ed. "*Ἐκκλησία* G1711 (ekklesia)," in *The New Testament International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Nashville, TN: Zondervan, 2014), 402.

[100] Caudle, "The Ekklesia as an Assembly that Invokes Response," 3.

introduction of new religious rites and festivals, the awarding of honors and rewards, and the conferring of the citizenship.[101] Every ekklesia governed throughout the Greco-Roman period. According to Young-Ho Park, "For the Greek's in the period of the classical democratic-republic process, the primary meaning of '*εκκλησία*' was the actual gathering at a specific time and in a particular place, rather than an abstract community or institution."[102] Its role was to activate and enforce the cultural customs and laws, ensuring each city looked and acted like Rome itself. In other words, the secular ekklesia had expansive authority in determining the affairs of their cities and territories. To adequately manage these affairs, the ruling council typically met three to four times per month.[103]

Freedom of speech was essential to the idea of the Assembly. Regardless of his status, a citizen could speak; however, those over 50 spoke first. At 18, young Athenian males were enrolled in their demes' citizen lists and then served for two years in the military. Afterward, they could be in the Assembly, unless otherwise restricted. At the meetings, the ekklesia made decisions about war and foreign policy, wrote and revised laws and approved or condemned the conduct of public officials. Since every ekklesia governed through Greco-Roman rule, its role was to activate and enforce the Hellenistic customs, education, and laws ensuring that each city looked and was in compliance with the government itself. Caesarea Philippi, as mentioned in Matthew 16:13, was an administrative center, built by King Herod, as a local ekklesia.

---

[101] Oskar Seyffert, *A Dictionary of Classical Antiquities, Mythology, Religion, Literature and Art,* reprint ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 203.

[102] Park, *Paul's Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly,* 11.

[103] Dean Briggs, *Ekklesia Rising: The Authority of Christ in Communities of Contending Prayer* (Kansas City, MO: Champion Press, 2014), 111.

There were two types of assembly: *εκκλησία* and εκκλησία κυρία. Εκκλησία met approximately 40 times throughout a year to manage their own local communities. Εκκλησία κυρία met to decide on important agendas, such as the defense of the country, control of the magistrates and political leaders (probation or impeachment), food supply and the announcement of the confiscated properties and high-profile lawsuits. This ruling council typically met three to four times a month.[104] In this Greek legacy, the *εκκλησία* was the crux of the democratic republic and was deeply integrated in the very concept of the human being as one who can participate in ruling. A distinction must be made between the function and purpose of the ekklesia. The role of the ekklesia was to act as a governing body in which citizens participated.[105] The purpose of the ekklesia, as a participant in ancient Greek context, was the means by which citizens sought the good of the polis by seeking their common advantage at a specific locale.[106]

Biblical Ecclesiology

Biblical ecclesiology has its foundation in biblical exegesis. According to the Anchor Bible Dictionary, "Biblical exegesis is the process of careful, analytical study of biblical passages undertaken in order to produce useful interpretations of those passages. Ideally, exegesis involves the analysis of the biblical text in the language of its original or earliest available form."[107] Jesus never said He was going to build a church. In Matthew

---

[104] Park, *Paul's Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly,* 13.

[105] Caudle, "The Ekklesia as an Assembly that Invokes Response," 4.

[106] Ibid., 8.

[107] "Biblical Studies: Conducting Exegesis," Marquette University, last updated January 6, 2021, https://libguides.marquette.edu/c.php?g=36796&p=2974240.

16:18, Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my *εκκλησία*." Richard Last, Ancient Greek and Roman Studies professor, explains that "traditionally, *εκκλησία* is either a mimicry of Greco-Roman civic discourse or continuity with use of the word in the Greek Septuagint.[108]

Young Ho Park notes that a biblical ekklesia is not simply an abstract community of those who had been summoned or called.[109] Park asserts that the New Testament use of *ekklesia* alludes to there being one *ekklesia* per city.[110] Last asserts that the New Testament use of *ekklesia* had to do with "Christ-followers [choosing] *εκκλησία* to mark themselves from other associations."[111] The reason ekklesia was chosen instead of synagogue, according to Tara Caudle, is because ekklesia was used to invoke the idea of a civic assembly, not an exclusive religious assembly. Even in the Septuagint (the Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek, abbreviated LXX), the term ekklesia was used to denote an assembly of a whole nation, not simply a gathering of any size.[112] The LXX was widely read among Hellenized Jews in the years leading up to Christ and by Christians for generations after the first century.[113] As we understand Jesus' words in Matthew 16:13-20, we will see our way forward through a biblical exegesis of this passage.

---

[108] Last, "Ekklesia Outside the Septuagint and the Demos," 959-80.

[109] Park, *Paul's Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly,* 11.

[110] Ibid., 219.

[111] Last, "Ekklesia Outside the Septuagint and the Demos," 960.

[112] Caudle, "The Ekklesia as an Assembly that Invokes Response," 8.

[113] Kyle Pope, "The Use of the Word Ekklesia in the Old Testament," Olsen Park Church of Christ, accessed September 24, 2020, http://olsenpark.com/Sermons07/CongregationOfTheLord.html.

Reimagining Ecclesiology

The central premise of this chapter is that the church is siloed, disconnected, and disengaged from the communities they are called to serve. This is due largely to an error in translation and misinterpretation of Matthew 16:18. Nearly every Bible translation in English renders Jesus as having said "I will build my church." But church is the wrong concept because it is literally the wrong word. It is not a poor translation; rather, it is a mistranslation of the original language.[114] Jesus never said he would build a church.[115] He said, "I will build my ekklesia." When the term ekklesia is investigated and contextualized in the time period of Jesus, our English translation of the word unravels quickly.

Ekklesia is not a proper noun, but, when properly translated and contextualized, is a co-opted,[116] secular concept that Jesus deliberately gave his disciples to teach them how to contextualize the gospel into the Greco-Roman world they were called to serve. Understanding the roots and function of this secular ekklesia, which predated Jesus' use of the term, is crucial to rediscover what his intent was and how this term can be used in our twenty-first-century context.[117] Several questions should be kept in mind as we approach any study of Matthew 16:13-20. Why would Jesus even suggest building another religious institution when he was already a part of one? Jesus was a rabbi within the period of Second Temple Judaism. He taught and ministered regularly in a synagogue

---

[114] Briggs, *Ekklesia Rising*, 21.

[115] Kurtz, *Leaving Church, Becoming Ekklesia*, ix.

[116] Silvoso, *Ekklesia,* 23.

[117] Ibid., 23.

system among Jewish people. He knew both the Temple and synagogue's leadership, polity, and protocols. He understood their traditional interpretations of the Torah, the Prophets, and Writings. He knew their Messianic expectations, values, and beliefs, and upheld the traditional faith and practice of Jewish life.

It was not Jesus' intention to come and die just to establish another failing institution or even to reform an old one. It is necessary to recognize that the New Testament writers did not employ the word ekklesia to describe a new kind of synagogue called church. The bare use of ekklesia, as used in the LXX, was a term familiar to those who worshipped in the synagogue. Therefore, in order to gain better insight into what Jesus had in mind and how his disciples and Matthew's intended Greco-Roman audience would have read, heard, and understood the term, we will explore Matthew 16:13-20 with the following exegetical tools while considering biblical contextualization, Christology, and missional theology.

Over the centuries the church has read Matthew 16:13-20 as a proof text to validate four marks of the Church—"one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" church, regardless of denominational distinctions. The very idea of re-imagining ecclesiology challenges our propriety; we are trained to love and revere the church. Over the centuries, church as an institution has offered many good and worthy spiritual and emotional harbors: pastoral care; a warm, social environment for godly relationships to flourish; a hub for teaching and edification; and good works. By no means is it my intention as we re-examine this passage of scripture to demean the institution. Rather, it is my intent to re-present this text as a new missional paradigm which will engage local churches to unite together in community research, evaluation, coalition building, collaboration, and

civic partnership to improve the gospels contextualization which results in both personal and community transformation. Let's take a closer look at what Jesus meant when He said, "Upon this rock I will build my *εκκλησία* and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18, KJV).

Biblical Contextualization

"When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi" (Matthew 16:13, KJV).

The historical context of any verse, book, or passage you read needs to be a factor in how you interpret what you are reading. Often, this outside information will give you a lot of insight as to the purpose of what has been written. The why, when, and where details of the passage will be connected to the historical context.[118] Our story begins in a very familiar place to Jesus and his disciples. Caesarea Philippi provided the earliest readers of Matthew's text a historical context invoking image rich in biblical memory of what had happened in this place and what it now stood for under Roman rule. Caesarea Philippi was located twenty-seven miles north of Capernaum, Jesus' home base. Why here? Why not Bethlehem-Judea? Or Jerusalem, where the Devil challenged him to prove His identity by asking, "If you are the Son of God?

The biblical history behind Caesarea Philippi and the thoughts it conjured within Matthew's first-century audience goes all the way back to the book of Genesis.[119] The important insights to consider as we contextualize this passage include:

---

[118] Emily Kurz, "Why Is Historical Context Important When Studying God's Word?" Ethnos 360 Bible Institute, October 10, 2017, https://e360bible.org/blog/historical-context-important-studying-gods-word.

[119] Mark W. Bartusch, *Understanding Dan: An Exegetical Study Of A Biblical City, Tribe And Ancestor* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, Ltd., 2003).

1. It was here that Abraham and 318 trained men pursued those who had captured and carried off his nephew, Lot.[120]
2. It was the original territory given to the tribe of Dan, the seventh tribe allowed to choose their territory as depicted in Joshua 19:40-48. After the conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, the land was divided up and the region was settled by the tribe of Dan.[121]
3. In the biblical census in Numbers, the tribe of Dan is portrayed as the second largest tribe after Judah (Numbers 1:39).
4. It was here that the tribe of Dan worshipped the Canaanite god of Baal.
5. It was here Samson lost his strength under the Philistines.
6. It was here that Jeroboam set up the golden calf at the gates of Hades.
7. It was in this region that Ahab and Jezebel continued to lead Israel into Baal worship.
8. It was here that the Greeks built worship sites dedicated to "the God of Pan," Jupiter, and Nemesis.
    a. The God of Pan is considered to be one of the oldest of Greek Gods. He is associated with nature, wooded areas and pasturelands, from which his name is derived. People who had irrational fear appealed to Pan.
    b. Jupiter is the king of the gods in Roman mythology. He was the god of the sky and thunder. He is known as Zeus in Greek mythology.

---

[120] Bartusch, *Understanding Dan,* 22-25.

[121] Ibid., 20.

c. Nemesis was the ancient Greek goddess of divine retribution. As such, she meted out punishment for evil deeds.

9. Then, under the Roman government Herod the Great would be given the area by Caesar Augustus in 20 BC. In honor of Augustus' visit to the area, Herod the Great built three temples to Augustus, called Augusteums.
    a. The Temple of Zeus
    b. The Temple of the Goats
    c. The Temple venerating Caesar
    d. Other statues and statuettes dedicated to Athena, Zeus, Aphrodite, Apollo, Dionysus and Pan. The best-preserved statue (restored from two fragments) is that of a half life-size Artemis with a hunting dog attacking a hare at her feet.[122]
10. After the emergence of the Roman empire, this site would be constructed as a Herodian capitol dedicated to Caesar as a home for an administrative center for a Roman ekklesia.

Caesarea Philippi was rebuilt and represented a Greco-Roman worldview. It is against this backdrop that Jesus deliberately led his disciples,[123] as a continuation of his ongoing mission: "I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (which may suggest that his focus was the land of the Northern Kingdom formed after the division) and point out Israel's failure as being faithful to who God called them to be. This allowed Jesus to transition into the question "Who do men say that I am?" and telling Peter who he is.

---

[122] John Francis Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi: Banias, The Lost City of Pan* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, Ltd., 2004).

[123] Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi,* 78-79.

Jesus may have been calling them into a place of identificational repentance over the Northern kingdom's past, and how they might view both a Jewish and Gentile mission. Young Park-Ho argues that Paul would later use the word *ekklesia* as the means of engagement for both Jew and Gentile believers to represent who Christ called His people to be, which is why Jesus begins his discussion on who he is and how his disciples saw themselves.[124] As a rabbi, Jesus certainly chose this location deliberately to carefully stage and framed a scene for maximum impact.[125]

Christology

> *"Who do men say that I am?" And they said, "Some say that you are John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets". He said unto them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father which Is in heaven. And I also say to you, that you are Peter"* (Matthew 16:13-18, KJV).

When Jesus asked his disciples "Who do men say that I am?" he was taking up a discussion on identity. In this moment, Jesus was challenging them to think about how they saw God, how they saw themselves, and how they saw others. These questions would affect how they would order their future world and Jesus' intended outcomes of the *missio Dei*. In light of their religious training in Second Temple Judaism, their understanding stood in both the prophetic traditions and Jewish Messianic expectations. Their answer to his question would reveal their Christological, soteriological and eschatological perspectives as discussed above. Some saw Jesus standing in the prophetic

---

[124] Park, *Paul's Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly,* 98-112.

[125] Briggs, *Ekklesia Rising*, 17.

tradition: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. However, Peter then answers in saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus promptly affirms Peter and his Second Temple Messianic perspective.

His proclamation of who Jesus is came with a soteriological and eschatological view regarding of the kingdom of God and its relation with the kingdoms of this world as John the Revelator would later say, “The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 11:15, KJV, emphasis added). For thousands of years, the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah. With Jesus confirming his identity, they assumed He would deliver them from Roman oppression and restore dignity to the Jewish kingdom. He would feed armies, remove physical barriers, heal the wounded and raise those killed. But Jesus’ plan was in stark contrast to their expectations and He quickly dashed their hopes. He would go up to Jerusalem, but not for military conquest. His kingdom was of an entirely different nature to the Roman Empire or Jewish expectations. But the question would remain as to how this Messianic task would be undertaken.

Missional Theology

> *“And I also say to you, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my εκκλησία and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”* (Matthew 16:18, KJV)

Jesus explains exactly how He intended his disciples to complete their assigned task in bringing the nations into a relationship with him. Jesus did not state, “I will build my temple” or “I will build My synagogue,” the two prominent religious institutions in His time. Instead, he chose a secular entity first developed by the Greeks and continued

in practice by the Romans during the days of Jesus' ministry.[126] Why? The answer is fascinating, challenging, and empowering.[127]

"The reason why ekklesia was chosen, and not a synagogue" according to Caudle, is because ekklesia was used to invoke the idea of a civic assembly which Jesus and his disciples already understood in their context.[128] As stated earlier, in the wider Greek culture, the word ekklesia meant a duly convened assembly of citizens. Although the Greeks invented this word, it was the Romans who adopted, developed, and implemented the ekklesia and its function into the heart of their empire.

Paul Christopher acknowledges the power of the ekklesia: "As members of ekklesia, or groups with foundational authority to act, individual persons are shaped into agents with transformative potential."[129] Caudle concludes that the ekklesia, which Jesus spoke of, is an assembly that evokes a response. "The importance of the Greek contextual use of the word cannot be overstated, as the Greek context heavily influences and informs the biblical context and usage of the word."[130] The *ekklesia,* when studied in both the Greek and biblical contexts, points clearly to the same goal—to contribute to the common good.

The understanding of *ekklesia* as an assembly gathered to seek the common good holds new application for modern day Christians. Christians can no longer gloss over this

---

[126] Silvoso, *Ekklesia,* 19.

[127] Ibid., 19.

[128] Caudle, "The Ekklesia as an Assembly that Invokes Response," 8.

[129] Paul Christopher, Pamela Klassen, and Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *Ekklesia: Three Inquiries in Church and State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 10-11, https://www.scribd.com/read/372875759/Ekklesia-Three-Inquiries-in-Church-and-State.

[130] Caudle, "The Ekklesia as an Assembly that Invokes Response," 2.

term and render it simply as "the church," which often conveys the idea of a once or twice weekly program.[131] In light of this study, Alan Hirsch rightly points out, "We need to search for a more authentic expression of ekklesia."[132] Frank Viola wrote:

> A revolution in both theology and practice is upon us. Countless Christians, including theologians, ministers, and scholars, are seeking new ways to renew and reform the church. Others have given up on the traditional concept of church altogether. They have come to the conviction that the institutional church as we know it is not only ineffective, but it's also without biblical merit. For this reason, they feel it would be a mistake to reform or renew the present church structure. Because the structure is the root of the problem.[133]

Conclusion

For Christians, expanding the definition of ekklesia*,* based on the context and use of the word, requires a larger response to the cultures they are called to serve in.[134] It also calls for us to re-image ecclesiology to seek the good and transformative effect the kingdom of God can have in our cities, towns, and communities. The church cannot hunker down in church buildings and proclaim the rest of the world is out of their hands. Believers must respond to the call to be a part of the ekklesia and be an active member of that assembly.[135] Each of us are called to do what Jeremiah 29:7 exhorts: "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (BSB). This happens when we begin to

---

[131] Ibid., 12.

[132] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 16.

[133] Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008), 15.

[134] Caudle, "The Ekklesia as an Assembly that Invokes Response," 12.

[135] Ibid.

understand that ekklesia has never been about a building, but about all of Jesus' people, the called out ones, coming together in a city to seek justice and love others.

CHAPTER 3

ETHNOGRAPHY: JOINING GOD IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

In Acts, 17:24 Paul states, "God . . . does not live in temples made by human hands," (BSB) which means that church facilities are not places where God lives. John 1:14 says, "The Word became human and lived among us" (GWT). If He came to dwell among us, as a twenty-first-century, biblical ekklesia, it is important to locate Him and join Him in His work. Jack Dennison is right when quoting George Otis, Jr.: "If we are to succeed in our mission to further God's kingdom on earth, we must gather the information that allows us to see our communities as they really are, and not as they merely appear to be."[1] Believe it or not, rarely if ever does a church do this. The usual mode of operation is to act without asking and ministering in a context void of facts and objective understanding.[2]

In the last chapter, we learned in Matthew 16:13-20 that Jesus taught that He was going to build his own "ekklesia" in order to bring salvation and wholeness to communities and neighborhoods throughout the world they would called to serve. This text is a wonderful place to do the work of ethnography research. It is a rich story embedded in a Gentile neighborhood. It is here that Jesus used "the rocks of idolatry," the "temples dedicated to Caesar and Zeus" and the "administrative ekklesia center" of Herod's capital city. He deliberately chose the context of this place to call His disciples to proclaim the coming reign of God. It was in this place, once inhabited by the tribe of

---

[1] Jack Dennison, *City Reaching: The Road to Community Transformation* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 173.

[2] Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, 190.

Dan, that Jesus invoked his disciples' memory of history, pointed out the problems they faced in the shadow of an empire, and proclaimed that "the gates of hell" itself would not be able to prevail against the soteriological work of his ekklesia.

In this chapter, we will explore how ethnography enables us to get acquainted with our own neighborhood's "rocks and statues," "places of worship," "architecture," "streets," "signs and symbols," and what it all communicates about our community's identity, health, theology, values, power, and authority. In the same manner, Jesus explained to his disciples how, through his ekklesia, they would establish the reign of God together right on the "rocks of idolatry" and in the midst of both spiritual and political oppression. It is here when Jesus asked his disciples who do men say he is. They replied, "Some say . . . you're Jeremiah" (Matthew 16:14, GWT). Could it be possible that as Jesus was invoking the disciples' memory of this place, they thought of Jeremiah's words to the Jews in exile in Babylon to "seek the welfare of the city" to which the Lord had carried them? Certainly, Jesus was not calling upon them to withdraw from society; he was calling them to participate in it and engage it. Ethnography is a way of getting to know our communities and locating where God is in our neighborhood.

"Every city, community, and neighborhood is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language: the city speaks to its inhabitants, we speak our city—the city where we are—simply by living in it, by wandering through it, by looking at it."[3] Jesus' disciples understood his verbal confrontation was the prophetic task in their cultural context. When engaging culture is seen as a prophetic confrontation in continuity with the biblical

---

[3] Roland Barthes, "Semiology and The Urban," in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (New York: Routledge, 1999), 168.

prophets' vision of steadfast love, justice, and righteousness, this requires knowing our neighborhood.[4]

Walter Brueggemann states, "The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."[5] Like a traditional Greek ekklesia, Jesus was calling for a new kind of ekklesia to seek the welfare of the cities wherever the disciples would sojourn. The "ekklesia" which Jesus had in mind was one that embodied the essentially subversive nature of the Christian encounter with empire wherever it is found in the urban context.[6] As one who passionately embodies the prophetic tasks, as the disciples pointed out, the prophetic vocation Jesus presented at Caesarea Philippi, confronts the cultural challenges posed by alternative worldviews. In order to engage these complexities, various urban missiologists, theologians, and practitioners have developed different approaches to understanding urban communities in the city, including ethnography.[7] It is the task of defining culture for the purpose of developing a critical understanding of context in the faith and culture dialogue as an interdisciplinary effort.[8]

---

[4] Leong, *Street Signs*, 93.

[5] Walter Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2012), 3.

[6] Leong, *Street Signs,* 94.

[7] Ibid., 100.

[8] Ibid., 163.

Why Ethnography Matters

Ethnography research contributes insight to cultural literacy: How to *read* and *write* culture,[9] and "*what matters?*"[10] Mary Moschella has defined ethnology as a "form of social research used by sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and other scholars to study living human beings in their social and cultural contexts."[11] And that particular context must be thoroughly understood and considered by any church wanting to make an impact on its community in a meaningful way.

Every community has a unique story. When it comes to building a bridge of meaningful spiritual influence to a community, our first act must be to ask, "What's the story here?[12] Stories help us to organize our memories and memories root us in place.[13] Place is space which has historical meaning.[14] Jesus promised that He would prepare a place for us.[15] We all need a place to stand but most people do not perhaps stop to reflect very deeply on what effect such places have upon them and why.[16] Places shape us, they contribute to our conception of the way things are in the world and they constitute the

---

[9] David P. Leong, *Race & Place: How Urban Geography Shapes the Journey to Reconciliation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 28.

[10] Courtney Bender and Ann Taves, *What Matters? Ethnographies of Value in a Not So Secular Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 1.

[11] Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 25.

[12] Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, 190.

[13] Leonard H. Johnson, *No Place Like Home: A Christian Theology of Place* (Portland: Urban Loft Publishing, 2014), 26.

[14] Johnson, *No Place Like Home,* 44-45.

[15] John 14:3.

[16] John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place: Explorations in Pastoral Practice And Empirical Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, 2003), ix.

terrain upon which our lives unfold.[17] People's stories are as varied as the landscapes and languages of the world; and the storytelling traditions to which they belong tell the different truths of religion and science, of history, and the arts.

Stories tell people where they came from, and why they are here; how to live, and sometimes how to die.[18] Places shape the identity of commonalities. We derive a sense of identity and meaning from places.[19] Place is a space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation, and re-envisioned destiny.[20] Our humanness cannot be found in escape, detachment, absence of commitment, and undefined freedom.[21]

Edward Chamberlain shared how land, place, and stories intertwine in establishing his own understanding on the importance of place. He writes, "

> It happened at a meeting between an Indian community in northwest British Columbia and some government officials. The officials claimed the land for the government. The natives were astonished by the claim. They couldn't understand what these relative newcomers were talking about. Finally, one of the elders put what was bothering them in the form of a question. "If this is your land," he asked, "where are your stories?" He spoke in English, but then he moved into Gitksan, the Tsimshian language of his people -- and told a story. All of a sudden everyone understood . . . . even though the government foresters didn't know a word of Gitksan, and neither did some of his Gitksan companions. But what they understood was more important: how stories give meaning and value to the places we call home; how they bring us close to the world we live in by taking us into a world of words; how they hold us together and at the same time keep us apart.[22]

---

[17] Roger S. Greenway, ed. *Discipling the City: Theological Reflections on Urban Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 1.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Robert M. Hamma, *Landscapes of the Soul: A Spirituality of Place* (Notre Dame, IN: Ava Maria Press, 1998), 18.

[20] Johnson, *No Place Like Home,* 44-45.

[21] Ibid., 45.

[22] J. Edward Chamberlain, *If This Is your Land Where Are Your Stories* (New York: Vintage Canada, 2010).

Place is a complex cultural matrix of ideas, practices, and beliefs framed by metaphor philosophies and theological systems.[23]

Ethnography is a study of shared memories of the past, a culture's assigned meanings of the present, and digging into the archaeology of the future. Cultural anthropologist Brain Huey says, "The term ethnography has come to be equated with virtually any qualitative research project where the intent is to provide a detailed, in-depth description of everyday life and practice."[24] Ethnography is an underused methodology in community transformation. This neglect is especially injurious to the discipline because ethnography provides non-replicable insight into the processes and meanings that sustain and motivate social groups.[25] Ethnography can help shine a light on what matters to people in a community.[26] Ethnography enables us with the work of identifying and naming what God has been doing in that culture or that place.[27] Huey continues,

> Ethnography may be defined as a qualitative research process and method (one conducts an ethnography) and product (the outcome of this process is an ethnography) whose aim is cultural interpretation. The ethnographer goes beyond reporting events and details of experience. Specifically, he or she attempts to explain how these represent what we might call "webs of meaning", the cultural constructions, in which we live.[28]

---

[23] Chamberlain, *If This Is your Land Where Are Your Stories,* 53.

[24] Brian A. Hoey, *A Simple Introduction to the Practice of Ethnography and Guide to Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Berkeley, CA: BePress, 2014), 1-2.

[25] Steve Herbert, "For Ethnography," *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 4 (December 2000): 550–68, https://doi.org/10.1191/030913200100189102.

[26] Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice,* 34.

[27] Johnson, *No Place Like Home,* xii.

[28] Ibid.

To effectively reach your community, you must know your community which is why ethnography is important. George Otis provides us six important categories for community ethnography research:

1. The status of Christianity in our community (What's Right? What's wrong?)
2. Prevailing social bondages
3. Worldviews and allegiances
4. Spiritual opposition (Real? Or Perceived? Evidence?)
5. The evolution of current circumstances (Why Here? Why Now?)
6. The potential for spiritual breakthroughs (What can be done to make things better?)[29]

Ethnographic methodology uses ethnographic analysis of the culture in order to understand how social structures and human behavior interact and influence a community.[30] Like other methodologies, ethnography possesses different variants.[31] Ethnography as a social science involves collecting, analyzing, and sharing high-quality information to enable informed decision-making processes in bringing solutions in at-risk communities.[32] However, any attempt to define ethnography precisely would obscure important differences in approach. Still ethnography is generally recognized to rest upon participation observation, a methodology whereby the researcher spends considerable

---

[29] George Otis, *Informed Intercession* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), 81.

[30] Lausanne Movement, "Towards the Transformation of Our Cities/Regions (LOP 37)," 41.

[31] Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1993), http://phg.sage.pub.com/cgi/content/refs/24/4/550.

[32] John M. Perkins, ed., *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing It Together and Doing It Right* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 80.

time observing and interacting with a social group.[33] It begins with asking any group of residents, regardless of socio-economic status, to describe what a healthy community looks like, finding commonalities and differences in their definitions, perspectives, moral values, culture, politics, religion, neighboring capacity, and what works and does not work.[34] Shane Claiborne points out that it's about identifying and articulating some of the distinctive ingredients that will make for a healthy ministry and sustainable missional life.[35]

Ethnography Benefits Local Churches

Churches must understand the communities they serve. This may seem obvious, but it goes deeper than just knowing who is in the pew. For a church collective to truly fulfill its mission as a biblical "ekklesia" it is important to read, listen and know the neighborhoods, they are in. After an accurate community assessment is conducted the right congregational initiatives can be identified and prioritized. According to Glenn Smith, Professor of Urban Theology and Missiology at Bakke Graduate University, there are a number of critical steps that must be taken to do this effectively. It is beneficial to know how to "exegete the neighborhood" in much the same way that we have learned to study a biblical text.[36] Community exegesis focuses on reading the environment.[37] It

---

[33] Steve Herbert, *Progress in Human Geography* (New York: Sage Publications, 2000), 551.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Gordon and Perkins, *Making Neighborhoods Whole*, 11-12.

[36] Glenn Smith, "Exegete Your Community to Inform Transformational Strategies," Send Institute, April 24, 2018, https://www.semdinstitute.org/exegete-community.

[37] Leong, *Race & Place, 27.*

examines the physical locations and how the places we create in those locations communicate meaning beyond the structures themselves.[38] When we examine our communities, we examine ourselves.[39] Cities and communities are a complex array of independent and interconnect systems.[40]

To study a community, an attentive ethnographer can use a three-step process to analyze the context. (1) It begins with the social-demographic study. It continues with a contextual biblical and theological reflection; (2) Explores how social structures and human behavior interact and influence a community; and (3) culminates in specific actions that the community of faith undertakes to pursue the transformation of the context.[41] To do this one must master the dominant tendencies of the culture, so as to grasp where we have come from and where we are going as a society and what the mission of God in this culture will look like.[42]

- To begin, discover the historical events that have formed the community's identity. These could include unifying events such as coming together to fight a massive fire or build a community center or selfless, heroic acts that give people hope.[43]
- Look at the growth patterns of the community to understand how and why it has grown, current trends, and what the future may hold. Along with this, understand who lives in the community, where they came from, why they came, and where they work.

---

[38] Leong, *Race & Place*, 28.

[39] Ibid., 27.

[40] Lausanne Movement, "Towards the Transformation of Our Cities and Regions (LOP 37)," 21.

[41] Glenn Smith. "Reading Your Community: Towards an authentic encounter with the city." *Church For Vancouver*, December 21, 2016, https://churchforvancouver.ca/reading-your-community-towards-an-authentic-encounter-with-the-city/#_ftn3

[42] Ibid.

[43] Smith, "Exegete Your Community to Inform Transformational Strategies."

- Find out if the local population is stable or is expected to move, where new businesses may develop, or major changes occur?
- Study the design of the city.[44] A community's semiotics are a reflection of collective understanding (or misunderstanding) of our life together. Streets, street signs, architecture statues, and how places have been and are developed is deeply symbolic and represent what the community says about itself.[45]
- Examine the ethnic, social, economic, religious, and generational dimensions of the community. Determine its political and cultural realities. Who wields power? Who controls the media, commerce, education, and the arts?
- Analyze people's aspirations and what facilitates or thwarts them. This knowledge alone will enable a church to become an integral, trusted partner in a community.
- Observe the places where people gather, such as community centers, libraries, shopping centers, sports facilities and make sure the church meets them there.
- Identify the Twelve Sectors of the Community. Dr. Len Sweet identifies these as: Politics and power; Business and economics; Science; Technology; Health and healing; Environment; Religion; Culture (pop and high); Communications; Art; Governance; Education; Family and relationship.[46]
- Identify the community's stakeholders. Explore who these opinion leaders are and who influences them. What are their perspectives or worldviews? Who are their constituents and why?
- Do the "spiritual mapping of the community." Get to know the faith community, their denominations, size, and age, and any social services they are delivering.[47] Look at the resources and ministries within the community already in place; their attendance, membership, growth, and whether that growth is through transfer, conversion, or births. Discover which churches have closed and why. Have others planted new churches recently? If so, find out what worked what did not, and why. Locate each faith community is situated, its history, stories, giftings, and what its particular calling has been to resource the community.
- Conduct surveys and collect community data to identify the top problems in the community, what resources may be addressing those current needs and what resources are lacking in the community.
- Inventory human resources you can tap from the faith community to help with door-to-door calling as well as agency resourcing that are involved with literacy,

---

[44] Smith, "Exegete Your Community to Inform Transformational Strategies."

[45] Leong, *Race & Place*, 27.

[46] Sweet, *Ring of Fire*, xi.

[47] Smith, "Exegete Your Community to Inform Transformational Strategies."

> overnight shelters, emergency food, and clothing, etc. How can you ally with them and make them part of your strategy?

In biblical history, data collection before acting is not unique. Moses and Joshua sought data when they sent spies into the Promised Land. Nehemiah, too, was a surveyor. Before investing himself in the reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem, he spent days assessing the situation through firsthand inspections (Neh. 2). Only then did he seek to formulate a plan.[48] The need for objective data and "contextualized analysis" provides insight into what the community really needs.[49]

An ethnographic understanding is developed through the close exploration of several sources or data. Using these sources as a foundation, the ethnographer relies on a cultural frame analysis.[50] Without doing due diligence, any effort put forth is a guesswork kind of effort. The importance of data collection cannot be understated. Rich data gives local churches an insight into the real needs of a community without further guesswork.[51] This kind of research makes local congregations a relevant resource and trusted enough to fulfill their missions.

Listening to the community. Listening affirms a person's inherent dignity. It demonstrates a theology based in humanity.[52] Listening to the community combats a paternalistic approach to solving a community's problems. Paternalism is often defined in terms of outsiders—usually people who have achieved some measure of success in the

---

[48] Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, 191-92.

[49] Ibid., 191.

[50] Hoey, *A Simple Introduction to the Practice of Ethnography and Guide to Ethnographic Fieldnotes,* 550.

[51] Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, 194-95.

[52] Gordon and Perkins, *Making Neighborhoods Whole*, 101.

eyes of others—coming into a community and communicating (in approach and general attitude) "we are successful. We have the answers. We know what works and what does not. Just listen to us and eventually everything will be fine."[53] One of the side-effects of such a paternalistic approach is that it causes people in the community, who most need to participate in building the community, to step aside. They think they have nothing to contribute because someone else can do it better.[54]

Community stories provide for what might be called "targeted" data collection through conducting interviews by asking specific, open-ended questions. The emphasis is on allowing people within the community to answer without being limited by predefined choices. In most cases, an ethnographic interview looks and feels little different than an everyday conversation and indeed in the course of long-term participant-observation, most conversations are in fact purely spontaneous and with any specific agenda.[55]

Cities and communities are a complex array of interdependent and interconnected systems.[56] Ethnographers generate understandings of culture through representation of what may be called emic perspective, or what might be described as the "insider's point of view."[57] Each of these sectors and their stakeholders shape our communities and bring important contributions and resources to meet the needs of their communities. An ethnographic understanding is developed through close exploration of the data that these

---

[53] Gordon and Perkins, *Making Neighborhoods Whole*, 102.

[54] Ibid., 103.

[55] Hoey, *A Simple Introduction to the Practice of Ethnography and Guide to Ethnographic Fieldnotes,* 550.

[56] Lausanne Movement, "Towards the Transformation of Our Cities/Regions (LOP 37)," 21.

[57] Hoey, *A Simple Introduction to the Practice of Ethnography and Guide to Ethnographic Fieldnotes,* 2.

sectors can provide. Using the data sources as a foundation, the ethnographer relies on the cultural frame of analysis.[58] A major challenge for those seeking to understand how their communities work can identify and survey these sectors in order to gain their perspective into the problems and needs of their community. Community transformation requires coordination and collaboration of efforts from these different sectors of society.[59]

Semiotics is an applied science of community sign processes, or signification and communication, signs and symbols. Semiotics adds important anthropological dimensions in community studies. In general, semiotic theories take signs and sign systems as an object of identifying community values and history.[60] According to Leonard Sweet, the Greek word for signs is *semeion*, "a word derived from one of Jesus' favorite sayings: Red sky in morning/sailors take warning/Red sky at night/sailors delight. You know how to read the signs of the sky; learn to read the signs of the times." Semiotics is the study of signs and the art of making connections, seeing the relationships between apparently random signs and reading the meaning of those relationships.[61] Semiotics explores the symbolic nature of built environment in cities, and the social construction of meaning that occurs in the midst of everyday urban elements.[62]

---

[58] Hoey, *A Simple Introduction to the Practice of Ethnography and Guide to Ethnographic Fieldnotes,* 2.

[59] Lausanne Movement, "Towards the Transformation of Our Cities/Regions (LOP 37)," 35.

[60] Steven C. Hamel, *Semiotics: Theory & Application* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2011), vii.

[61] Jon M Sweeney, "Leonard Sweet On Signs, Signals, Churches, and the Current State of Starbucks," Explore Faith, accessed October 13, 2020, http://www.explorefaith.org/faces/my_faith/leonard_sweet.php.

[62] Leong, *Street Signs*, 105.

Cultural competence is about our will and actions to build understanding between people, to be respectful and open to different cultural perspectives, strengthen cultural security, and work towards equality in opportunity. Relationship building is fundamental to cultural competence and is based on the foundations of understanding each other's expectations and attitudes, and subsequently building on the strength of each other's knowledge, using a wide range of community members and resources to build on their understandings.[63]

Pastoral ethnography. According to Mary Clark Moshcella, "ethnography as a pastoral practice" is a way of immersing yourself into the life of a people's faith and practice in order to learn something about and from them.[64] It entails listening and observing a congregation's actions and interactions. In a pastoral context, it involves recording your observations and reflections, analyzing them, and creating a narrative account of a local congregation's history, beliefs, values, and particular religious and cultural life.[65] It draws from narrative models that asks questions such as: "How can a pastor or a rabbi care intelligently for the whole congregation and the wider community of which it is a part?" Moschella continues, "How can the congregation itself begin to respond in more faithful and prophetic ways to the 'living human web(s)' of life both within and beyond the local community?" This pastoral practice is communal and

---

[63] "What Does It Mean to be Culturally Competent?" Make It Our Business, June 22, 2017, http://makeitourbusiness.ca/blog/what-does-it-mean-be-culturally-competent.

[64] Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice,* 4.

[65] Ibid.*,* 5.

contextual.[66] Ethnography of each local faith expression lends itself to hear the important influences and voices of a community's theology.

Contextualizing theology. Every city, community, and neighborhood has a theological construct and perspective. All theology is contextual theology.[67] In the field of ethnography, exploring the spiritual geographies of a city helps to see how particular forms of thought might be related to particular cultural conditions.[68] The purpose of such an investigation is to come to a better understanding of a community's own self-definition, beliefs, values, and the life experiences of its diverse people. E. Digby Baltzell identifies and compares two different American cities, Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia - each unique, differing in theology, and perspectives on authority and leadership that created tension in the formation of our nation.[69] Theology matters.

The thesis of Baltzell's book is quite simple: Puritans had a public theology. Boston was to be a classic "city on a hill"; it was designed to model a theological view beyond Sunday worship. Puritans believed their faith and practice influenced their cultural, economic, and political structures as well. Quakers in Philadelphia, on the other hand, had egalitarian and democratic impulses based on their belief that "there is that [sic] of God in every person." Quaker theology is intensely personal. It works from the

---

[66] Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice,* 4, drawing from an overview of these changes in the field of pastoral theology. Nancy Ramsey, ed., *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004).

[67] Stephen Bevans, *Contextual Theology as Practical Theology* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2018), 30.

[68] Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 80.

[69] E. Digby Baltzell, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Class Authority and Leadership* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), 4.

inside out, rather than outside in. Philadelphia was "egalitarian" in its understanding of authority and leadership while Boston was based in a hierarchical understanding. The necessity of doing theology "contextually" is a particular concern for the local setting of Christian faith and practice and is obviously not a new suggestion.[70]

In order to understand contextualization from a New Testament, early Jewish-Christian perspective, Paul's mission to the Gentiles directly reflects what Jesus explained to his disciples regarding the contextualization of their faith in the grotto of foreign deities in Caesarea Philippi. When Paul entered Athens in Acts 17, he was confronted with the challenge of contextualizing his faith in the midst of Greek philosophies, religious beliefs, and a theology of a city that sought to honor every god. Having been raised as a Jewish person under Roman imperialism, his life was shaped by multiple and sometimes competing cultural influences.[71] However, Paul claims for himself a solid Jewish identity. He identifies himself as Pharisee of Pharisees within the traditions of Second Temple Judaism and speaks of the Israelites as his own people.

Yet it is clear that Paul was also thoroughly Hellenized, familiar with the writings of the Greeks and wrote in Greek rhetoric style. Moreover, his letters demonstrate he knew proper Greco-Roman letter form, a further indication of his education.[72] With cultural competence, he found a "hook" to present the gospel in the midst of the city's pagan theology. He found it in a statue dedicated to an unknown God and began to contextualize the gospel. In any effort of community transformation, it is important to understand and work with cultural competence in the milieu of cultural philosophies, and

---

[70] Leong, *Race And Place*, 154.

[71] Carr and Conway, *Introduction to the Bible*, 246.

[72] Ibid., 247.

theology. Joel Korkin suggests there are three critical functions required for engagement with our communities: sacred space, the provision of basic security, and a commercial market. Each of these spheres has its foundation in the theology of the community.[73] Kingdom-minded ministries must learn to recognize and engage deeply into how this theology influences all three spheres in our communities.[74]

Social systems thinking. David Stroh calls for social change advocates in the field of public health, to adopt systems thinking used by programmers to solve complex problems.[75] The discipline of systems thinking is more than just a collection of tools and methods, it is also an underlying philosophy. Systems thinking involves moving from observing events or data, to identifying patterns of behavior over time, to surfacing the underlying structures that drive those events and patterns.[76] As in the medical field, effective treatment follows thorough diagnosis. In this sense, systems thinking is a disciplined approach for examining problems more completely and accurately before acting. It allows ethnographic researchers to ask better questions before jumping to conclusions.[77]

Another useful distinction is the difference between a system and systems thinking. Donella Meadows defined a system as "an interconnected set of elements that is

---

[73] Swanson and Williams, *To Transform a City*, 27.

[74] Ibid., 27.

[75] David Peter Stroh, *Systems Thinking for Social Change: A Practical Guide to Solving Complex Problems, Avoiding Unintended Consequences, and Achieving Lasting Results* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2015), 19-23.

[76] Michael Goodman, "Systems Thinking: What, Why, When, Where, and How?" The Systems Thinker, accessed October 15, 2020, https://thesystemsthinker.com/systems-thinking-what-why-when-where-and-how.

[77] Goodman, "Systems Thinking."

coherently organized in the way that achieves something." Meadows' definition points to the fact that systems achieve a purpose, which is why they are stable and so difficult to change. Building on her definition, David Stroh defines systems thinking as "the ability to understand these interconnections in such a way as to achieve a desired purpose."[78] Introducing systems thinking into a broader context embraces multiple dimensions:

Spiritual: The ability to see and articulate what may benefit diverse people over time.

Emotional: The ability to master our emotions in service of a higher purpose.

Physical: The ability to bring people together for collaboration.

Mental: The ability to recognize how our individual and collective thinking affects the results we want. This last point illustrates another critical benefit of this methodology.[79]

Identify a Theory of Change. A Theory of Change is a specific type of methodology for planning, participation, and evaluation used in companies, philanthropy, not-for-profit and government sectors to promote social change. A Theory of Change defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions.[80] A Theory of Change describes strategies used in ethnographic research to accomplish its intended outcomes. Used as a part of planning and evaluation process creates a

---

[78] Stroh, *Systems Thinking for Social Change,* 16.

[79] Ibid., 17.

[80] "Theory of Change," Wikipedia, last modified December 17, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_change.

commonly understood vision for problem(s). It defines overarching, evidence-based frameworks for ethnographic research.[81]

Each of these distinguishing characteristics of ethnography are not just methodological, but emerge from a particular understanding of the nature of social life.[82] Through investigation of these processes, ethnography enables analysis of particular understandings of a community's daily life, social structures, relationships, its assigned cultural memories, meanings, story and place. Of importance, framing a question properly identifies what Theory of Change and missional paradigm is needed in solving multi-dimensional problems.

Ethnographic research enables local churches that are siloed, disconnected, and disengaged from their neighborhoods to develop an objective view of their community. Ethnographers seek to gain an emic perspective, or the "natives' point of view" of a specific culture.[83]

For the purpose of this research, two questions that may emerge among biblical scholars are, "Can ethnography, as an approach of the social sciences, be applied in biblical interpretation?" Did Jesus engage in ethnography as a methodological approach to show how his ekklesia could be engaged in their communities? Seeking out the meaning of the scripture beyond the literal meaning is essential to understand God's word.[84] In recent years, theologians have increasingly used ethnographic research to

---

[81] Dean, *Planning Primer*, 12.

[82] Herbert, *Progress in Human Geography*, 553.

[83] Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[84] Michael H. Koplitz, *What Rock did Yeshua Build the Church Upon?: An Examination of Matthew 16:13-20 Using Ancient Bible Study Methods* (Self-published, 2019), 5.

strengthen the connections between both biblical and theological constructions.[85] By applying ethnography to the scriptures, we are afforded new insights into the texts and contexts we are exegeting with a focus on culture or an aspect of culture: (1) Holistic ethnography as a comprehensive description and analysis of the entire culture; and/or (2) Micro-ethnography, which express particular aspects of culture.[86]

It is, of course, important to note here that the people of the Bible cannot be studied by the participation method of traditional ethnographic frameworks but are only accessible, however imperfectly, through the medium of texts.[87] Dr. Michael Koplitz states there are two main differences in teaching approaches in exegeting biblical passages: a Greek teaching method based on the use of Greek translations of the Bible or a Hebraic model that approaches the Bible from a culturally Hebraic model.[88] "The Greek approach used by many interpreters in the field of biblical interpretation relies on the study of ancient manuscripts and how we get our printed Bibles from them."[89] The Greek method of learning the scriptures has prevailed over centuries. One problem is that only

---

[85] Natalie Wigg Stevenson, "From Proclamation To Conversation: Ethnographic Disruptions To Theological Normative," *Palgrave Communications* 1 (2015): 15024-33.

[86] Mesherem Lechissa, "Major Types of Qualitative Research Methodologies," Bahir Dar University, June 2017, 2. https://bdu.edu.et/capacity/sites/bdu.edu.et.capacity/files/Attachement/Approaches%20of%20Qualitative%20Research_0.pdf.

[87] Louise Joy Lawrence, An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew: A Critical Assessment of the Use of the Honour and Shame Model in the New Testament (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck. 2003), 3.

[88] Koplitz, *What Rock did Yeshua Build the Church Upon?,* 4-5.

[89] Brandon Crowe, "Textual Criticism: What It Is and Why You Need It," Westminster Theological Seminary, February 11, 2019, https://faculty.wts.edu/posts/textual-criticism-what-it-is-and-why-you-need-it/.

the literal interpretation of scripture was often viewed as valid, as prompted by Martin Luther's *solo literalis* meaning that only the literal translation of scripture was accurate.[90]

Jeff Benner points out interpreting these writings with Western interpretive methods results in textual misinterpretations and mistranslations.[91] Therefore, it is essential that we learn the methods of the ancient Hebrews in order to better understand the texts we read. The Hebrew language itself leads to different possible interpretations because of the construction of the language. Since ethnography includes research in cultural languages, it is always important to examine the Bible in terms of its written languages, which include Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

Four Ethnographic Methods

Louise Lawrence states, "In recent years social scientific methods have impacted New Testament studies in a number of ways."[92] In her view, ethnography as an applied science to New Testament texts enhances insight into the ancient Mediterranean world(s) in how the original audience heard, read, and understood stories and text.[93] As an approach, Dr. Lawrence chose Literary Ethnography, Critical Ethnography, Reading Ethnography, and Mediterranean Ethnography in order to reconstruct Matthew's cultural language, narratives, and social world.[94]

---

[90] Koplitz, *What Rock did Yeshua Build the Church Upon?,* 5.

[91] Jeff A. Benner, "The Philosophy of the Hebrew Language," The Ancient Hebrew Research Center, accessed October 21, 2020, https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/language/philosophy-of-the-hebrew-language.htm.

[92] Lawrence, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew*, 1.

[93] Ibid., 250-59.

[94] Ibid., 1-21.

A Literary Ethnography approach toward the Bible offers a different way to understand Scripture, allowing us to interpret it in new ways. When dealing with the biblical stories and literary motifs using this method, the procedure aims at performing a sort of ethnography of a dead culture, since any attempt to read biblical texts ethnographically would mean we are forensically interpreting the remnants of a long-gone cultural context, in a similar way to the field of biblical archaeology.[95] In spite of the paradoxical character of this approach (since there are no "biblical natives" around to interview to explain their worldview) Emanuel Pfoh believes we can approach the Bible from the point of view of ethnography. In some sense, this requires us to treat biblical data as a cultural expression to be deconstructed to comprehend the biblical writer's worldview and the assumed context of the text, to proceed later with any kind of historical interpretation.[96]

Literary Ethnography seeks to unveil some of the mysteries of culture through the application of cultural theory presented in the text, exploring the role of the writer, his or her story, and in its relationship to a place.[97] Ethnography becomes an approach to experiencing, interpreting, and representing culture and society that informs and is informed by sets of different disciplinary agendas and theoretical principles.[98] In this

---

[95] Emanuel Pfoh, "Notes on Ethnographic Method and Biblical Interpretation," *Biblische Notizen* 172 (2017): 43-52. https://www.academia.edu/23493582/_Notes_on_Ethnographic_Method_and_Biblical_Interpretation_Biblische_Notizen_172_2017_43_52.

[96] Pfoh, "Notes on Ethnographic Method and Biblical Interpretation."

[97] Amanda Christy Brown and Holly Epstein Ojalvo. "The Power of Place: Doing Ethnographic Studies of Local Sites," *The New York Times*, April 15, 2010, https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/ the-power-of-place-doing-ethnographic-studies-of-local-sites/.

[98] Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography* (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 2006), 18.

approach towards literature, ethnographic research can be objective and subjective by asking such as: Who creates knowledge? How? and What is the role of the writer(s) and the story in relationship to a place?[99]

A Critical Ethnography approach in biblical interpretation reflects deeper truths than the need for verifiable facts and information. In this model, the ancient text is a window to individual subjectivity and collective belonging: *I am because we are and we are because I am.*[100] Critical ethnography may encompass three forms of inquiry: (1) Oral history, which is recounting of social historical moments reflected in the life or lives of individuals who remember them and/or experience them; (2) personal narrative, which is an individual perspective and expression of an event, experience, or point of view; and (3) topical interview, the point of view given to a particular subject. It is important to note that these forms are not isolated from one another.[101]

An Ethnography Reading of texts focuses primarily on the writers and editors who write with a cultural perspective. What does it mean to write about another? What is the role and the status of the author, as someone who creates and crafts a narrative, selects and shapes the data to be presented, who presents an account in which others are actors but the author's name is the one that appears on the cover?[102] Ethnographers of reading have interests in all manners of literacy, form of texts in the center of ritual and

---

[99] Brown and Ojalvo, "The Power of Place."

[100] D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 25-26.

[101] Madison, *Critical Ethnography,* 26.

[102] Paul Dourish, "Reading and Interpreting Ethnography," University of California, Irvine, October 2012, http://www.gillianhayes.com/Inf231F12/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/ethnography-ways-submit.pdf.

communal life.[103] This body of research has posed fundamental questions about how texts are culturally constructed for the nature of reading: What constitutes an act of reading? Who has the access and legitimacy to read? Who reads alone and who reads together? What does reading accomplish? What is deemed worth reading? Who deems it so? Whose writings are authoritative? And what social historical processes, local and global, structure acts of reading?[104] Often, an ethnographical reading of biblical texts may include Historical Criticism, Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism, Source Criticism, Deconstructionist Criticism, and Rhetorical Criticism with the goal of examining the author's background, audience, and intent in writing the texts.

A Mediterranean Ethnography considers the source of the writing as being non-Western. The Bible is a familiar book to Christians. At second glance, though, the Bible is one of the most foreign books. Its language, even in English translation, is often difficult to understand, especially since we read with a Western perspective. Both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures reflect their ancient origins in many ways. They were composed in different time periods and religious contexts much different from contemporary Judaism and Christianity.[105] Louise Lawrence has provided an important insight in the field of biblical interpretation with the use of, what she calls 'Mediterranean Ethnography.'

In recent years, these social-scientific methods have impacted New Testament studies in a number of ways. Features of Matthew's literary world include a brief listing

---

[103] James S. Bielo, *Words Upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 12-14.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Carr and Conway, *Introduction to the Bible*, 18-19.

of characters, places of both elite and non-elite, and their contributions to the speech of the Bible that came from a first century Mediterranean Greco-Roman Jewish world.[106] These voices of tradition, found in Matthew's gospel, constitute the social ecology of the time (including selected philosophical and religious traditions emerging from the Judaism's Second Temple period), and provides insight into the middle eastern cultural interactions in Matthew's world which includes and involve citations of relevant ethnographic and ancient evidence from non-western cultural perspective.[107]

If we are to read Jesus' question in Matthew 16:13 as Westerners or North Europeans, we assume Jesus is testing the disciples to learn whether they understand his identity. However, if we read, as a traditional Mediterranean or Middle Easterner, we would assume that the people he is asking about would have known his earthly origins, place of birth, and family. Most would have not known his true identity. For Matthew to feature subsequently this incident and presume that Jesus really does not know His own identity seems implausible, especially when we explore this passage through the lens of a Mediterranean ethnography perspective. Applying these ethnographic approaches in our study of biblical texts affords us important insights that provide a foundation for what an ethnographic study of place, its cultural history, and context and use of language spoken may have meant to its original audience and what those words meant to those who would later read the texts.

---

[106] Lawrence, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew,* 4.

[107] Ibid.

An Ethnographer's Approach to Matthew 16:13-20

Texts propose a world to us.[108] As we have seen, using the framework of ethnography can be a useful tool in researching literary texts.[109] Applying ethnographical tools to interpret Matthew 16:13-20 produces important insights into the biblical text. This permits us to apply the social sciences in reading and exegeting our cities, communities and neighborhoods. When Jesus ventured northward into Caesarea Philippi, he engaged an ethnographic approach (i.e., using the semiotics of rocks, statutes, and temples) to introduce his own rabbinical thoughts on Christology (Who do men say the Son of Man is?), his soteriology (Peter's "You Are The Christ" confession), his incarnational theology ("flesh and blood have not revealed this to you but my Father in Heaven), his sociology of politics, power and authority ("I give you keys to the kingdom") and his eschatology ("the gates of Hell shall not prevail", GWT). Each of these important ethnographic insights provides a biblical foundation to enable us to engage and locate God in our neighborhoods.

In recent years, theologians have increasingly used ethnographic research methods to strengthen the connections between their theological constructions and the social practices they seek to impact. An ethnographic intervention into traditional methods for producing theological knowledge can shift common to propositional claims into a humbler apologetic. Glenn Smith states,

---

[108] Roxburgh, *Missional*, 75-84.

[109] Frank Malgesini, "An Ethnographic Approach to Literature: Reading Wildfell Hall in the L1 and L2 Classroom," (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2010), 10, https://repository.arizona.edu/bitstream/handle/10150/193935/azu_etd_11021_sip1_m.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

> Communities often reveal their imaginations by the cultural network they produce and constantly reproduce in social interactions, objects and symbols and literature. Social imaginations on the other hand may be studied in terms of four features: characteristic stories, fundamental symbols, habitual behavior of residents; and a set of questions and answers. These presuppositions interact with each other in a variety of complex and interesting ways. By studying the intersection of these big themes, the practitioner can unearth the perspective of the context under study.[110]

Certainly Critical, Literary, Reading, and Mediterranean Ethnographic approaches toward biblical texts opens up fresh readings, interpretations, and insights for reflection of Matthew 16:13-20.

This small sampling of ethnographic interpretation into what Jesus envisioned offers insight into how to locate and join God in our neighborhoods. From an ethnographic researcher's point of view, this passage challenges a religious culture that is siloed, disconnected, and disengaged from a culture. What Jesus envisioned was not to be established in the safe-spaces; rather, it is in the marketplace and margins where secularity and spirituality collide—places like the pagan sanctuary of Pan at Caesarea Philippi—that the "gates of hell" will not prevail.[111] Taking an ethnographic approach in biblical interpretation affords us insight into an incarnational God who is making his way into our neighborhoods in order to make them whole.

Conclusion

As we have explored throughout this chapter, ethnographic research gives voice to the communities we are called to serve. By exegeting, listening, and mapping our

---

[110] Glenn Smith, "Reading Your Community: Toward an Authentic Encounter with the City," accessed October 24, 2020, 5, https://www.academia.edu/10289993/Reading_your_Community_Towards_an_authentic_Encounter_with_the_city.

[111] Leong, *Race & Place,* 63-78.

communities, ethnography enables a disconnected church to discover "signs of hope" within a city.[112] With each proclamation in Matthew 16:13-20, we have a firm foundation for an ethnography that points us to God's grace towards a city. In order to join God in his *missio Dei* in our neighborhoods, we must keep in mind that God uses His grace to animate architects, artists, prophets, and politicians alike, surrounding them with teaching and learning tools mediated to us by people who left the scene of human history long ago.

By its very essence, the city is an artifact or product of human activity in which God is mediated in structures and things people have created and built, which is why ethnography is an important part of a new missional paradigm.[113] A healthy person needs a healthy family and families develop best in communities. This is why seeking the welfare of a city is our business as the Body of Christ until the consummation of His kingdom occurs.

---

[112] Ray Bakke and Jon Sharpe, *Street Signs: A New Direction in Urban Ministry* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2006), 111.

[113] Bakke and Sharpe, *Street Signs*, 111.

CHAPTER 4

EPIDEMIOLOGY AS A SYSTEM OF ORGANIZED SOTERIOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY WITHIN PUBLIC HEALTH

What does a pandemic and an opioid crisis have to do with a church's soteriology, eschatology, and its relationship in the public health field of epidemiology? "Epidemiology is the study of the distribution and determinants of health-related states or events in specified populations and the application of this study to the control of community health problems."[1] More specifically, "Epidemiology is the study (scientific, systematic, and data-driven) of the distribution (frequency, pattern) and determinants (causes, risk factors) of health-related states and events (not just diseases) in specified populations (neighborhood, school, city, state, country, global). It is also the application of this study to the control of health problems."[2] The Center for Disease Control and Prevention makes the following observation: "In epidemiology, the patient is the community and individuals are viewed collectively."[3] That is, the group's health is of primary importance. The wholeness of the community is the driving factor, to see neighborhoods, cities, and regions living healthy lives. But this is also the goal that the

---

[1] J.M. Last, ed., *Dictionary of Epidemiology*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 61.

[2] Principles of Epidemiology in Public Health Practice, 3d ed. https://www.cdc.gov/csels/dsepd/ss1978/lesson1/section1.html.

[3] CDC: " What Is Epidemeology?" https://www.cdc.gov/careerpaths/k12teacherroadmap/epidemiology.html.

Church should have, to see communities made whole. This is evident because public health has roots in the Bible.[4]

Biblical anthropology teaches that a human being is a whole person with physical, mental, social, ecological and spiritual dimensions.[5] This chapter's function is to provide an epidemiological understanding in the field of public health as a model for church health and wellness ministries and how it can function as a system of organized eschatology and soteriology to contextualize the gospel in making neighborhoods whole.

Foundation for Church Involvement in Public Health

Some may ask why is it imperative for the church to understand epidemiology and engage in it as a part of a new missional paradigm for community healing and transformation? First, society is unraveling.[6] We have to understand what life is like in urban communities today. Within changing economic, political, and cultural situations, this is a difficult task.[7] Soup kitchens and shelters for the homeless are major ministerial programs in many urban churches now. They are important to the daily lives of thousands of individual but, in the long run, the ministry in the city calls for visions that move far beyond. Food pantries and temporary dormitories assist only a relative few of the vast sea of people in urban needs.[8] As discussed in Chapter One, "Worsening public health

---

[4] Robert B. Wallace, *Maxcy-Rosenau-Last Public Health and Preventive Medicine*, 15th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2008), 5.

[5] Cesar Galvez, "Biblical Perspectives on Health for the Contemporary World," *International Forum* 13, no. 1 (April 2010): 20-29.

[6] Sweet, *Ring Of Fire*, viii.

[7] Eleanor Scott Meyers, ed., *Envisioning the New City: A Reader on Urban Ministry* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 19.

problems (such as pandemics, chronic illness, genetically modified food, food deserts, violence, poverty, homelessness, addiction, a failing health care system, and political divisions, etc.) are more than one church can address," which is why epidemiology is essential for the church's understanding.

Epidemiology is the study of the health of human populations. It is the basic science and most fundamental practice of health and preventive medicine.[9] The word "epidemiology" comes from epidemic, which translated literally comes from the Greek means "upon the people." Epidemiology has its roots in the Bible.[10] Its functions are to: (1) discover the agent, host, and environmental factors that affect health and provides the scientific basis for the prevention of disease, injury, and the promotion of health; (2) determine what is the cause of illness, disability, or death to establish priorities for research and action; (3) identify those sections of the populations that have the greatest risk from specific causes of ill health so that the indicated action may be directed appropriately; and (4) evaluate the effectiveness of health programs and services in improving the health of the population.[11]

It is important to understand that the field of epidemiology differentiates itself from healthcare. Public health services such as epidemiology are population-based services that are focused on improving the health status of a population; healthcare

---

[8] Meyers, *Envisioning the New City*, 20.

[9] Wallace, ed., *Maxcy-Rosenau-Last Public Health and Preventive Medicine*, 5.

[10] Ibid.

[11] A. Havenman-Nies, S.C. Jansen, J.A.M van Oers, and P. van t'Veer, "Epidemiology in Public Health Practice," *American Journal Of Epidemiology* 174, no. 7 (October 2011): 871.

focuses on hospitals, primary care, and acute care providers who treat individuals.[12] Epidemiology addresses the origin of a disease, how it travels through populations, the rate of speed, how to slow it down, and what health solutions are needed. This model is foundational in all public health coalitions and can be found within biblical texts.[13] For the last three decades, many communities, organizations, businesses, and even nations are forming alliances, joint ventures, and public and private partnerships more than ever before.[14] Joint ventures practiced in the Christian mission field, like World Vision,[15] CBN's Operation Blessing,[16] and Samaritans Purse,[17] have been based on epidemiology and the public health coalition model. If it is good enough for overseas missional work, why not here at home? Governor Mike Huckabee has said, "It is the work of the church which makes it possible what never could be accomplished by a governmental agency."[18]

Second, epidemiology is important because the same problems that a community faces affect families who attend our churches. What is happening in the community is always carried into our congregations because our communities are looking for answers. The drama of human experience is always played out on the stage of culture, according to Leonard Sweet, "Our churches cannot escape culture, nor would it be good if we

---

[12] Astho, "Pillars of Public Health," https://www.astho.org/Public-Policy/Federal-Government-Relations/Documents/Pillars-of-Public-Health/.

[13] See Acts 15:19.

[14] Francis Butterfoss, *Coalitions and Partnerships in Community Health* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 61.

[15] https://www.worldvision.org/corporate/.

[16] https://www.ob.org.

[17] https://www.samaritanspurse.org/donation-items/fight-epidemic-diseases/.

[18] Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, 169.

could."[19] We do not get to pick our ambient culture. God has determined our appointed times. As Sweet continues, "You and I are a part of an arranged marriage, made and chosen 'for such a time as this."[20] Unfortunately the church spends more time slandering its moment than in savoring and saving its moment. If we loved the world as God so loved the world, we could love it as well and love it to life.[21] Epidemiology is about life and making it better. As a scientific practice, epidemiology provides important research which will assist churches in understanding their community problems by answering two questions: "Why here?" and "Why now?" This valuable information enables city-wide churches to work together in assisting our neighborhoods in becoming healthy and well.

Third, epidemiology is part of a new missional paradigm since it was a principal concern in the Bible. The Pentateuch provides tremendous insight and relief concerning disease prevention. Remarkably, the Pentateuch is regarded as the earliest evidence we have of *sound* public health and sanitary practices. These ancient writings, when used in conjunction with modern medicine, can break the mode of transmission of virtually every scourge known to humanity.[22] Today, there are a number of epidemiological studies carried out by medical professionals, mainly in the USA, highlighting the positive effect of religion and spirituality on health that is enabling a new dialogue between the medical and theological disciplines. Scientific medicine has become increasingly interested in the

---

[19] Sweet, *Ring Of Fire*, 1.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] David Wise, "The First Book Of Public Hygiene," *Answers In Genesis Creation* 26, no. 1 (December 2003): 52-55. https://answersingenesis.org/biology/disease/the-first-book-of-public-hygiene/

spiritual dimension of the human person.[23] Epidemiology provides a foundation in the field of public health for community healing and wholeness. It affords the body of Christ a unique opportunity to fulfill its role in a ministry of healing. The idea of partnerships between the public health establishment and associated agencies, on the one hand, and religious institutions and organizations, on the other, may seem unlikely or counterintuitive. But in theory, as well as historically, public health leaders' solicitation of faith-based partnerships is consonant with both the longstanding prophetic role of religious institutions, at least ideally, and historic principles of public health practice.[24]

Robert Lewis, rightly observed, that throughout the twentieth century, the American Church increasingly became disconnected and disengaged with social action and community needs, instead retreating from the public square.[25] Michael Osterholm, an internationally known expert in infectious disease epidemiology gives an important insight into the importance of public health, "One of the things we have to understand is, that a virus, like Covid-19, operates under the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology. It doesn't in any way, shape, form, or bends itself to public policy."[26]

Leaders of the Protestant Reformation understood the biblical concept that both the spiritual and the physical well-being of humanity was important to God. When the

---

[23] World Council Of Churches. Preparatory Paper N° 11: The Healing Mission of the Church. https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/preparatory-paper-ndeg-11-the-healing-mission-of-the-church.

[24] Jeff Levin, "Engaging the Faith Community for Public Health Advocacy: An Agenda for the Surgeon General," *Journal of Religion and Health* 52 (2013):369. https://www.baylorisr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2013-JRH-Engaging-the-Faith-Community1.pdf

[25] Lewis, *Church Of Irresistible Influence*, 208.

[26] Dan Butettner, "Covid-19: Straight Answers from Top Epidemiologist Who Predicted the Pandemic," *Blue Zones*. https://www.bluezones.com/2020/06/covid-19-straight-answers-from-top-epidemiologist-who-predicted-the-pandemic/.

bubonic plague reached Wittenburg, Germany, in August 1527, Martin Luther led by example, declaring: "I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated." Luther wanted to avoid infecting others and causing their death through his negligence. He saw this action as wholly consistent with Christianity: "See, this is such God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God." Luther also invoked the Bible's admonition in the book of Leviticus that social-distancing and quarantine are essential to prevent the spread of diseases. "We must do the same with this dangerous pestilence," he wrote.[27] Epidemiology is an important practice that works towards the healing and wholeness of the community, which is why churches should be partnering together with public health coalitions in their communities.

Dr. Howard K. Koh, the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Health, on the launch of the federal government's "Healthy People 2020" initiative, said: "Faith-based organizations are a tremendous example of the social determiants [sic] approach at work. Where people worship and pray is often a place where people also have strongest social networks, and often receive information that can be of value to the health of their families and their neighborhoods. . . . So we have viewed that partnership as a very valuable one."[28] Public health officials have been reaching out to the faith community but very few churches have taken their place at the table. Jeff Levin has commented: "The presence of such

---

[27] Jeffrey Rosario, "Staying Home From Church to Protect Public Health is a Christian Tradition: Evangelicals Arguing for In-Person Services Amid Pandemic are Misunderstanding Christianity," *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/04/12/staying-home-church-protect-public-health-is-christian-tradition/.

[28] Levin, "Engaging the Faith Community for Public Health Advocacy," 369.

partnerships in public health, as noted, is not novel. Religious institutions have been a radix [that is, an idea whose time was ripe] of hospital formation, establishment of physicians' guilds, and organized efforts to professionalize healing for millennia, across the major faith traditions."[29] Clearly, a bridge needs to be reconnected in the twenty-first century if the church wants to reclaim a place of influence.[30]

Global public health has several persistent challenges that require partnerships, like local churches, to solve properly. One of the most significant explanations is that the core motivation for Christian involvement in public health is the continuation of Jesus' healing ministry. This motivation is based on gospel accounts of Jesus caring for the acute illnesses of individuals.[31] Perhaps Jesus was one of the first to recognize the importance of epidemiology. During a time in history when Greeks and Romans often traveled to a temple with offerings in exchange for healing, Jesus and his early followers healed free of charge wherever they encountered the sick, often at great peril to themselves. In fact, healing is a constitutive element of Jesus' ministry.

His first miracles in Mark's Gospel are casting a demon from a man and healing a woman with a fever. In all, there are 41 distinct stories of physical or mental healing. Jesus heals the blind, cures the withered hand, and stops the bleeding. He called his followers to do the same. Jesus instructed his disciples to go into towns and "cure the sick who are there" (Luke 10:9). Religion, caste, or payment is not a consideration; instead,

---

[29] Levin, "Engaging the Faith Community for Public Health Advocacy," 369.

[30] Lewis, Church Of Irresistible Influence, 108.

[31] Michael Rozier, "A Catholic Contribution to Global Public Health," Annals of Global Health 86, no. 1 (2020), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7059419/.

mercy and healing are extended to everyone.[32] In some ways, the interests of religion and public health overlap. In Matthew, Jesus even goes so far as to equate this succor with caring for God Himself. Continuing through the centuries, religion has done much to promote and, in some cases, impede health. Some of the first hospitals were established by the early Christian Church when Christianity became the official faith of the Roman Empire.[33] Leonard Sweet rightly notes: "Jesus calls his disciples to be first responders, those who run toward, not away from, the future."[34] When congregations are faithful to the example and mandate of Christ, they are communities of health and healing.[35] Unfortunately, as Sweet points out, "In spite of our best efforts, the church is unprepared for the future and unpleasant when asked to think about it."[36]

In many respects, commitment to public health is fidelity to the Church's origin. While acknowledging that there are very real barriers within the church to work with epidemiologists, local churches are a natural ally for global public health efforts. Regrettably, this will take a significant effort within the Church to realize the full potential of this work.[37] Dr. David Satcher, Director of U.S. Center For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), urged public health agencies as far back as 1995 to form

---

[32] Nicole Sotelo, "Jesus' Health Care Plan," National Catholic Reporter, October 1, 2009, https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/jesus-health-care-plan.

[33] Sandro Galea, "On Religion and Public Health," Boston Public School of Public Health, July 24, 2016, https://www.bu.edu/sph/2016/07/24/on-religion-and-public-health/.

[34] Sweet, *Ring of Fire*, vii.

[35] Thomas A. Droege, "Congregations as Communities of Health and Healing," *Interpretation* 49, no. 2 (1995): 117.

[36] Sweet, *Ring of Fire*, vii.

[37] Rozier, "A Catholic Contribution to Global Public Health."

partnerships with churches, especially in medically underserved African American communities and Hispanic neighborhoods.[38]

Why are national health leaders interested in partnering with churches? Because improvement in health, especially among at-risk populations, depends heavily on lifestyle changes and volunteer caregiving that can be promoted more readily by churches than by hospitals. People go to hospitals when they are sick, but when they are well they congregate with their faith communities.[39] In her book *Religion as a Social Determinant of Public Health*, Ellen Idler writes, "There are few if any communities in the world where there is no religious institution at all, and in many communities, particularly the most vulnerable, religious institutions may be the most important, vital, and functional social institutions in the lives of community members."[40]

Nearly one-fifth of the Gospel is dedicated to Jesus's healing ministry. Health's centrality in the gospel is further emphasized by the work of the disciples to whom Jesus grants. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, we read about the disciples' own travels spreading the gospel and healing those who are crippled or paralyzed. However, for all its prominence in the Gospels, the call of healing is not one taken up by many congregations today.[41]

---

[38] Droege, "Congregations as Communities of Health and Healing," 117.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ellen Idler, *Religion as a Social Determinant of Public Health* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 417.

[41] Victoria Strang, "A Healing Ministry for Modern Times: Christ, Organizing & Public Health," Theology and Culture, May 2, 2017, https://dailytheology.org/2017/05/02/jesus-was-a-community-organizer-who-healed-a-public-health-ministry-for-modern-times/.

A church-based health promotion and intervention can reach broad populations and have great potential for reducing health disparities. From a socioecological perspective, churches and other religious organizations can influence the behaviors of their members at multiple levels. Formative research is essential to determine appropriate strategies and messages for diverse groups and denominations. A collaborative partnership approach utilizing principles of community-based participatory research, and involving churches in program design and delivery, is essential for recruitment, participation, and sustainability. For African Americans, health interventions that incorporate spiritual and cultural contextualization have been effective.[42] Unfortunately, many churches are not prepared for pandemics, epidemics, or how to effectively address community wholeness.

Today the theory and practice of ministry is dramatically challenged by the conditions in our urban areas and communities.[43] When scientists want to learn about a group of people, they design a study so they can observe those people over time.[44] This research seeks to study how churches can use ecclesiology, ethnography, and epidemiology as a missional paradigm to improve the gospel's contextualization and work in community transformation. As our communities are becoming increasingly diverse, we have an unprecedented technological ability to study health and human

---

[42] Marci Kramish Campbell et al., "Church-Based Health Promotion Interventions: Evidence and Lessons Learned," *Annual Review of Public Health* 28 (2007): 214, https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.28.021406.144016.

[43] Meyers, ed., *Envisioning the New City*, 19.

[44] "We All Live Here," University of Texas, accessed November 3, 2020, https://bridgingbarriers.utexas.edu/whole-communities-whole-health/.

behavior,[45] which is why epidemiology, grounded in an eschatological and soteriological perspective, is important in a community's health and wellness. The things we can learn and the ways we can use that knowledge to help people thrive are revolutionary.[46] Epidemiology as an organized system of eschatology and soteriology is a way to rethink the way science and faith can work together to understand and address society health inequities.

Biblical Metanarrative as Framework for Public Health

Epidemiology is a biblical concept, seen especially in the healing ministry of Jesus. When we consider how Church through an epidemiological approach, with a proper understanding of eschatology and soteriology, we have a valuable public health model for contextualizing the gospel into our twenty-first-century communities. In light of the prevailing view of soteriology advancing in modern American evangelical perspectives, we need a refraction of the biblical view that salvation is more than getting souls to heaven.[47] In fact, we could make an important start by simply teaching that salvation is *not* about "Christians going to heaven." Salvation is about God redeeming the whole earth.[48] At the risk of oversimplification, all of Scripture can be understood as a drama of salvation in four acts.[49]

---

[45] University of Texas, "We All Live Here."

[46] Ibid.

[47] Stackhouse, *What Does It Mean to be Saved?,* 9-10.

[48] Ibid., 10.

[49] Droege, "Congregations as Communities of Health and Healing," 118.

The first act is the creation of the world as God intended it to be. The creation stories provide us with the norm of health, though we can capture the beauty and wholeness of creation only with clouded and distorted images. The second act in the is the story of brokenness, beginning with Adam and Eve's rebellion and continuing throughout history and affecting everything that God has made. The third act is the mending of creation in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The last act is the realization of salvation (wholeness), partially now and completely in the eschaton.[50] The drama begins with wholeness and ends with wholeness. Isaiah 53:5 supports that Jesus' atoning work on the cross brings the benefit of healing and wholeness. "He *was* wounded for our transgressions; *He was* crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace *was* upon Him; and with His stripes we ourselves are healed" (Holman Christian Standard Bible).

Without disparaging healing as a ministry of the church, a strong case can be made for health ministry as the greatest need in our communities today, which is why epidemiology is an important study for faith communities to undertake.[51] Often, healthcare is equated with health and wellness. They are not the same.[52] Our current health systems broadly encompass a full continuum between public health (population-based services) and a palliative medical care system (delivered to individual patients),[53]

---

[50] Droege, "Congregations as Communities of Health and Healing," 118.

[51] Ibid., 119.

[52] S. H. Woolf and L. Aron, eds., *U.S. Health in International Perspective: Shorter Lives, Poorer Health* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2013), 4, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK154484/.

[53] Ibid.; see also, Leonard Reeves, "Our Health Care System Is Sick," The American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation, January 28, 2019, https://www.aafp.org/news/blogs/leadervoices/entry/20190128lv-sickcare.html.

which is not focused on prevention, health and wellness, or cure.[54] The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Palliative Care as an approach aimed at alleviating the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual suffering of those with a life-threatening illness from the point of diagnosis onward. Its aim is to improve the quality of life and involves an intentional reduction of the patient's pain and suffering.[55] Unfortunately, pharmaceutical distributors are at the heart of the US health care ecosystem.[56]

According to the National Institute of Medicine, "We're last in the world (among the 20 most industrialized nations) when it comes to life expectancy."[57] Half a million people die every year from either failures of prevention, or from medical errors, or from avoidable complications of chronic illness that simply were not addressed.[58]

The ten leading medical causes of death per year in the United States are: Heart disease (655,381); Cancer (599,274); Accidents (167,127); Chronic lower respiratory diseases (159,486); Stroke (147,810); Alzheimer's disease, (122,019); Diabetes: (84,946); Influenza and pneumonia, (59,120); Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome, and nephrosis, (51,386); and Suicide: (48,344).[59] In an article titled "Actual Causes Of Death

---

[54] Brenda Faison, "Introduction to Faith and Health," Heal the Sick (Class Lecture, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC. February 9, 2018).

[55] Phillip Bush, "Advanced Care," Heal the Sick (Class Lecture, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C., February 23, 2018).

[56] "The Role of Distributors in the US Health Care Industry," Deloitte, 2019 https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/life-sciences-health-care/us-hda-role-of-distributors-in-the-us-health-care-industry.pdf.

[57] Woolf and Aron, *U.S. Health in International Perspective*.

[58] Patt Morrison, "The U.S. Medical System Is Broken. We Should Be Listening to Doctors About How to Fix It," *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 2017, https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-ol-patt-morrison-robert-pearl-healthcare-20170705-htmlstory.html.

[59] "Leading Causes of Death," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm.

In The United States," the authors investigated factors beyond the primary pathological conditions at the time of death to root causes.[60] Their analysis reveals that lifestyle factors lead to half the deaths: tobacco (400,000), diet, sedentary lifestyle (300,000), alcohol (100,000), infections (90,000), toxic agents (60,000), firearms (35,000), sexual behavior (30,000), motor vehicles (25,000), and illicit drug use (20,000).[61]

Not listed is the impact of pandemics, the worldwide spread of a new disease.[62] Pandemics are large-scale outbreaks of infectious disease that can greatly increase morbidity and mortality over a wide geographic area and cause significant economic, social, and political disruption. Evidence suggests that the likelihood of pandemics has increased over the past century because of increased global travel and integration, urbanization, changes in land use, and greater exploitation of the natural environment.[63]

During Covid-19, epidemiologists have made repeated calls to our faith communities to join them at the public health table since they consider them as an invaluable resource to assist their communities.[64] However, churches have not known how to assist their communities, other than to offer precautions like encouraging people to wear masks, practice social distancing, and provide emergency food for those affected

---

[60] J.M. McGinnis and W.H. Foege, "Actual Causes of Death in the United States," *JAMA* 270 no. 18 (1993): 2207-12, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8411605.

[61] Droege, "Congregations as Communities of Health and Healing," 119.

[62] Carl Heneghan and Tom Jefferson, "COVID-19 Deaths Compared to the Swine Flu," Centre for Evidence Based Medicine, April 9, 2020, https://www.cebm.net/covid-19/covid-19-deaths-compared-with-swine-flu.

[63] Nita Madhav et al., "Pandemics: Risks, Impacts, and Mitigation," in *Disease Control Priorities: Improving Health and Reducing Poverty*. 3rd ed., ed. DT Jameson et al. (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525302/.

[64] Mark Wingfield, "Your Friendly Neighbor Epidemiologist Has an Important Message for You," Baptist News, August 25, 2020, https://baptistnews.com/article/your-friendly-neighbor-epidemiologist-has-an-important-message-for-you/#.YFTQeC1h1QZ.

by a loss of income. One important aspect that the faith community has to offer is assistance in the escalation of opioid use during the pandemic.

According to the NIH (National Institute Of Environmental Health Sciences), the COVID-19 pandemic is fueling an opioid crisis.[65] Especially during a pandemic like Covid-19, churches have a unique opportunity to join, participate, and partner in a community coalition like CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America) as a faith community stakeholder.[66] Robert Lewis states that the most effective approach for churches to take is to "come alongside a needy social service and take on a major project important to them."[67] The mission of CADCA is to strengthen the capacity of community coalitions to create and maintain safe, healthy, and drug-free communities.[68] This drug-free coalition model is based on an epidemiological paradigm that is based on the three pillars of public health: (1) Assessment which collects and monitors the health needs of the community; (2) Policy Developments to inform, educate, and empower the public about health issues that affect them and their communities; and (3) Assurance of the enforcement of laws and regulations that protect health and safety, as well as, linking people to needed health services.[69]

Throughout the ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 global pandemic, the nation's opioid epidemic has grown into a much more complicated and deadly drug

---

[65] https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/public/hasl_get_blob.cfm?ID=12121.

[66] https://www.cadca.org/about-us.

[67] Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, 64.

[68] https://www.cadca.org/about-us.

[69] https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2020-12/issue-brief-increases-in-opioid-related-overdose.pdf.

overdose epidemic, according to the American Medical Association. The AMA is greatly concerned by an increasing number of reports from national, state, and local media suggesting increases in opioid- and other drug-related mortality—particularly from illicitly manufactured fentanyl and fentanyl analogs.[70] More than 40 states have reported increases in opioid-related mortality as well as ongoing concerns for those with a mental illness or substance use disorder. This issue briefly underscores the need to remove barriers to evidence-based treatment for those with a substance use disorder as well as for harm reduction services, including sterile needle and syringe services and naloxone.[71]

Church-based ministries dedicated to recovery have had great success and are valuable resources for community coalitions. Ministries like ATC (formerly known as Teen Challenge)[72] and New Life Center[73] have had significant results. A recent study conducted by the Center for Compassion at Evangel University confirms that an astonishing 78% of graduates from ATC addiction recovery centers remain sober and substance-free post-graduation.[74] ATC Survey respondents originally sought help for the following primary substances: amphetamines (27.6%), heroin (22.6%), alcohol (19.1%), prescription pain/anxiety/sleep medications (17.3%), cocaine (5.6%), marijuana (2.4%), fentanyl (.9%), club drugs (.6%), hallucinogens (.3%), and other (3.3%). Approximately

---

[70] https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2020-12/issue-brief-increases-in-opioid-related-overdose.pdf.

[71] Ibid.

[72] https://teenchallengeusa.org.

[73] https://www.newlife.center.

[74] Donna Washburn, Heather Kelly, Christine Arnzen, and Emma Hale, "Adult and Teen Challenge Outcome Study Report," ATC published Report, (2019), 5, 8. https://teenchallengeusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Adult-and-Teen-Challenge-Outcome-Study-Report-Final-REV-101519.pdf.

78% of respondents (*n*=266) reported seeking help from ATC for abuse of multiple substances. Of the total sample (*n*=340), 266 participants (78.2%) reported being sober since leaving ATC as compared to 74 participants (21.8%) who reported substance use since their completion of the program.[75]

Public health is a part of everyday life, and governmental public health is at the core of promoting health and protecting us from injury and environmental threats, as well as preventing the spread of disease. State and local health departments are consistently and constantly working to improve health in communities, yet their actions and accomplishments often go unnoticed. When the public health system is working well, the public's health is being protected and health in communities is improving,[76] which is why churches need to be present, engaged, and healing the sick instead of remaining siloed, disconnected, and disengaged. Epidemiology calls on citywide-churches to be present and engaged in our neighborhoods, especially in pandemic times.

As Cornelius Plantinga once quipped, the world as it currently operates is "not the way it's supposed to be."[77] These diseases and pandemics are not part of God's "very good" creation (Gen. 1:31). But because of the Fall of humanity (act two; Gen. 3), these issues present themselves as everyday troubles that wreak havoc in our world and the Church cannot be silent. The Church must not remain ensconced in their buildings,

---

[75] Washburn, et al., "Adult and Teen Challenge Outcome Study Report," 7-8.

[76] Astho, "Pillars of Public Health."

[77] Cornelius Plantinga, *Not The Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

praying only for Jesus to return. Instead, they must see the role they have to play, which is an eschatological role.

Eschatology and Epidemiology

At the time of this writing, it has been one year since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. The modern world has suddenly become reacquainted with the oldest traveling companion of human history: existential dread and the fear of unavoidable, inscrutable death. No vaccine or antibiotic will save us for the time being. Because this experience has become foreign to modern people, we are, by and large, psychologically and culturally underequipped for the current coronavirus pandemic.[78] Before this pandemic, many people had never heard about epidemiology as a science that has been the foundation to the public health framework, task forces, strategic partnerships, and coalitions that work together for at-risk communities, community healing, and wholeness.[79] Epidemiology is about healing our communities. The gospel, when rightly understood, is wholistic. Living the gospel means desiring for your neighbor and your neighborhood that which you desire for yourself and your family. Living the gospel means bettering the quality of people's lives—spiritually, physically, socially, and emotionally—as you better your own.[80] Living the gospel means sharing in the suffering and the pain of others. Two millennia ago, Jesus Christ interceded for His disciples in prayer. In this holy moment, shortly before he was to die, his final heart cry for them was

---

[78] Lyman Stone, "Christianity Has Been Handling Epidemics for 2000 Years," *Foreign Policy*, March 13, 2020 https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/13/christianity-epidemics-2000-years-should-i-still-go-to-church-coronavirus/.

[79] Butterfoss, *Coalitions and Partnerships in Community Health*, 62-63.

[80] Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 21.

being poured out to His Father. He requested that these men, in the days ahead, not be taken from the world (John 17:15), but instead be empowered to move on it and into it.[81] He prayed to His Father ,"As you sent me into the world, I have sent you into the world" (John 17:18 NIV). It is vitally important to remember that we are included in this prayer also: "My prayer is not for them alone, I also pray for those who will believe in me through their message" (John 17:20 NIV).[82] As His early disciples moved forward to establish their known world, we too are sent into our world and time.

Most history texts commonly ignore the Christian influence on values, beliefs, and practices in Western culture[83], including doing the work of epidemiology, promoting healing, health, and wellness, and establishing hospitals.[84] Perhaps we can draw some insight from these historical reflections as we weigh whether to hide out until Jesus returns or wisely and carefully venture out to heal the sick and care for the suffering.[85] Sociologist and historian Rodney Stark mounted a powerful argument that one of the principal reasons Christianity grew while Roman paganism waned in the 1st-4th centuries was because of the mercy Christians displayed toward people who physically suffered and, in particular, how Christians showed mercy during two plagues that ravaged the Roman Empire.[86] Early Christians created the first hospitals in Europe to provide

---

[81] Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence,* 87.

[82] Ibid., 88.

[83] Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed The World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 12.

[84] Ibid., 155-59.

[85] Kenneth Berding, "How Did Early Christians Respond to Plagues? Historical Reflections as the Coronavirus Spreads," Biola University: Talbot School Of Theology Faculty Blog, March 16, 2020, https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2020/how-did-early-christians-respond-to-plagues.

[86] Ibid.

hygienic places to care for the ill during times of plague. Their action was predicated on the belief that negligence to attempt to contain the spread was tantamount to murder.[87]

This important perspective is why we are not called to be siloed in our church brands, disconnected from the unchurched populations of our communities, nor are we called to stay in safe places waiting for the Lord's return. After all, didn't Jesus say, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13 KJV). Regrettably, as Robert Lewis has pointed out, "In my mind, much of our present evangelical apathy is tied to a philosophical surrender of the hope for doing any good. Since the world is hopelessly lost and, for many their eschatological view is one of escape, it becomes much easier to critique the world for its evil than to work in for its good."[88] Eschatology matters.

Emily Smith, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology at Baylor University, described criticism toward her epidemiological work as a "significant pushback" and admits someone labeled her endeavors as a "part of the mark of the beast," a reference to the Book of Revelation and the end times.[89] For her, the root of this conflict is a perceived clash between faith and science, a conflict she absolutely rejects. "Faith and science are not incongruous to me," says Smith. She believes there is "also a notion that if we are God's workmanship made in advance to do good works, part of that work is being the best scientist I can be." And to her, that is a spiritual calling: "The value of epidemiology is figuring out who are the most vulnerable and helping them. If we do the science well, we can help the most vulnerable."[90] Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch wrote,

---

[87] Berding, "How Did Early Christians Respond to Plagues?".

[88] Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence,* 106.

[89] Wingfield, "Your Friendly Neighbor Epidemiologist Has an Important Message for You."

"We need to recover the kind of worldview that can awaken our deepest passions and give us a redemptive framework and fund inner meaning for our activities in the world on God's behalf.[91]

Regrettably, there has been a growing trend within the American church, since the nineteenth century, to view eschatology as a means of escape from the world instead of being a roadmap for community transformation. Robert Lewis writes that, after World War I, evangelicals became disillusioned with earthly life and disconnected with social action and community needs.[92] Consequently, variant eschatological and apocalyptic perspectives that predicted a steady deterioration of life on earth often (unintentionally) led eschatological adherents to neglect the physical needs of others around them. Ray Stedman, an evangelical leader, went so far as to say, "No matter what the church does as God's instrument in the world, the ultimate end of the world will be anarchy and chaos. . . . No, the church is not here to improve the world."[93] Unfortunately, American churches who adopted this posture often found themselves disconnected from the real world, isolated, self-absorbed, and socially uninvolved. Lewis notes, "The church of the twenty-first century must shift its focus from an institutional orientation to a community orientation if it is to survive and thrive."[94] When applying a biblical epidemiological

---

[90] Wingfield, "Your Friendly Neighbor Epidemiologist Has an Important Message for You."

[91] Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping Of Things To Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 141-42.

[92] Lewis, The Church of Irresistible Influence, 208-09.

[93] Ibid., 209.

[94] Ibid., 210.

approach to the "Son of Man" motif in Matthew 16:13-20 provides a solid expectancy of God's cosmic intervention in the minds of Jesus's disciples.

While these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, "eschatology" is a general term that refers to ideas related to the end times while "apocalypticism" refers to a specific worldview that expects God's cosmic intervention to set right the evils of the world.[95] Many scholars have favored a broader meaning of the latter term, using the word apocalypse to refer to a sense of an ending, decline, societal crisis, and transformation.[96] Historically these views were not of escapism but rather cultural engagement. Eschatologically, the finished work of the Cross represents that all the promises to the nation of Israel had been brought to an end. Jesus said, "It is finished."[97] Apocalypticism, when viewed through the resurrection epidemiologically, is God's cosmic intervention to make the world anew. This is why Jesus did not give his disciples an assignment they could not complete. Like the path of the righteous, transformation progresses in a way that resembles Proverbs 4:18's light of dawn.[98]

This is why the Lord's Prayer, as found in Matthew 6, teaches those who follow Christ how to pray for the world around them. When His disciples asked Him how to pray, He instructed them to pray (among other things) that God's "kingdom [would] come, [and His] will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (v. 10). This is a clear

---

[95] Carr and Conway, *Introduction to the Bible*, 234.

[96] Daniel Wojcik, The End of the World as We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 11-12.

[97] John 19:30 (NKJV)

[98] Silvoso, *Ekklesia*, 39.

instruction that believers are to pray for, and by extension help bring about, God's kingdom and will on earth. He reigns supreme currently in heaven; Christians are to make the realities of heaven the realities of earth. This is the eschatology that believers should long for, that the earth would reflect heaven.

Any epidemiological approach towards Matthew 16:13-20 requires us to define both our own soteriological and eschatological views. Whatever view a local congregation adopts will reveal what position they may take toward culture. For example, in H. Richard Niebuhr's classic work, *Christ and Culture*, he presents five views that can inform a church's view of soteriology and eschatology.

- **Christ Against Culture**. This view holds to the view sin resides in "the world" and worldly culture should be rejected.
- **Christ of Culture.** This view holds to philosophy and science as if it is all good and teaches what Christ himself taught. Thus, "Christianity so interpreted became a religious and philosophic system, regarded doubtless as the best and only true one, yet one among many."
- **Christ Above Culture.** This view takes a synthesist approach; there is a Christ, and there is a Culture. To culture we go to discern the laws of culture, because culture is the work of God. Reason and revelation are both equally sources of law and truth for living, dependent upon which area of life one is living in.
- **Christ and Culture in Paradox.** This view takes the opposite approach of Christ Above Culture. It does not move from culture to Christ, but from Christ to culture. Christ deals with the problems of the moral life, and then provides for

man to carry on his work in life (culture) but does not directly govern the external actions in which he does so.

- **Christ the Transformer of Culture.** This view believes culture can be transformed by the community of Christ believers who engage it.[99]

Joseph Klausner distinguishes between what he calls "the vague *Messianic expectation* and the more explicit *belief in the messiah*."[100] He defines the Messianic expectation as "the prophetic hope for the end of this age, in which there will be political freedom, moral perfection and earthly bliss for the people of Israel in its own land, and also for the entire human race." He also considers belief in the messiah as "the prophetic hope for the end of this age, in which a strong Redeemer, by his power and his spirit, will bring complete redemption, political and spiritual to the people of Israel, and along with this, earthly bliss and moral perfection for the human race."[101]

Broader still is the definition given by R. Werblovsky: "The term messianism, derived from the Hebrew word, מָשִׁיחַ (anointed) and denoting the Jewish concept of a person with a special mission from God, is used in a broad sense to refer to belief or theories regarding eschatological (concerning the last times) improvement of the state of man or the world , an final consummation of history."[102] However, other interpretations of the apparently eschatological pronouncements in the New Testament exist, one of

---

[99] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951).

[100] Joseph Klausner, *Messianic Idea in Israel: From its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 9.

[101] Ibid.

[102] R.J. Zvi Verblovsky, "Messiah and Messianic Movements," *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago, 1976), Macropaedis 11:1017.

which is "realized eschatology," the idea that the kingdom of God was materialized in and through the ministry of Jesus.[103] C.H. Dodd states: "The declaration that the kingdom of God has already come necessarily dislocates the whole eschatological scheme in which is expected coming closes the long vista of future. The eschaton has moved from the present, from the sphere of expectation into that of realized experience."[104]

Rudolf Bultmann points out, "The essential thing about the eschatological message is the idea of God that it operates in it and the idea of human existence that it contains—not the belief that the end of the world is just ahead."[105] According to realized eschatology, the life and message of Jesus embodies a transformed conception of what blessedness and salvation, resurrection and eternal life, consists of. God's opposition to evil is exhibited not in the physical defeat of those who commit it, but in the very suffering that evil inflicts. Suffering displays itself as evil, and it is stark contrast with the love of God revealed in Christ that sin displays itself all the more vividly as sin. There is no crushing of enemies in this re-envisaged eschatological kingdom, but "a new view" of what it means for God's righteousness to be manifested, and for sin to be condemned.[106] It is within this view that epidemiology shines brightest as a model for the Church to do its work. In Mark 2:17 Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners"

---

[103] Mikel Burley, "Dislocating the Eschaton? Appraising Realized Eschatology," *Sophia* 56 (2017): 435, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11841-016-0534-0.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., 439.

(NIV). Epidemiology, as it relates to eschatology (and soteriology), is clearly found throughout the Bible, especially as an important component of Jesus' healing ministry.

Much of the literature that came out of the Second Temple era was greatly influenced by the political situation of the day.[107] This is why Jesus invoked the Athenian Civic Assembly as a model for his ekklesia, engaged ethnography for the future Gentile mission, and offered epidemiological steps as an organized system of soteriology (making neighborhoods whole) and eschatology (as an outcome of the finished work of Christ).

Soteriology and Epidemiology

Soteriology is the study of salvation. In my book *Foundation For Restoration*, I defined my soteriological view as

> God desiring that we are made whole – spirit, soul, and body (I Thessalonians 5:23). He made provision for our wholeness through the finished work accomplished of Jesus Christ on the cross (John 19:30); however, we must learn to walk in his provision (Phil. 2:12-13). When we look into the scripture at the use of the word, "salvation," we find its use in describing a beginning and continued "work" or "process" rather than a fixed state. All the way through the Scriptures, salvation is something that God has done, is doing, and will do. The best description of understanding "salvation" as a process is that once I ask Christ sincerely into my life, "I am saved," (Titus 3:5) "I am being saved," (I Cor. 1:18), and "I will be saved" (Phil.1:28). . . . So, salvation at a personal level is something secured in a past event (II Cor. 5:17), and is a work continued now incarnationally in us and works in our continued relationship with God and others. The word saved comes from the Greek word, *Sozo, which means: I was Saved/ healed (Past), I am saved/healed (Present), I will be saved/healed (Future).* In each of the three temporal stages, past, present, and future, God, and He alone, saves. Nonetheless, in each of these three stages, salvation comes by faith and active participation of our wills. This constitutes learning how to put off our old nature, being renewed in the minds, and putting on Christ as we grow stronger in our faith toward God by His grace (see Eph. 4:17-22; Phil. 3:7-14). His salvation

---

[107] James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 1.

> takes root in our lives and grows according to our capacity to receive it. Our part is to yield to Him, not in theory but in reality.[108]

For the Church to move beyond the walls of its sanctuaries and become more engaged with the communities they are situated in and called to, it needs to recover the biblical concept of salvation. According to Rousas John Rushdoony, "The word salvation (Soteria) means deliverance, preservation, victory, and health, and it refers to material and temporary deliverance, as well as personal, national, temporal and eternal triumph."[109] For Rushdoony, the biblical doctrine of salvation does not mean to escape.[110] In the Hebrew Scriptures the concept of salvation meant primarily deliverance from one's enemies or from danger.[111] "The Lord Is my light and my *salvation* - who shall I fear? The Lord is my life's fortress, Who is there to be afraid of?" (Psalm 27:1 GWT).

Within this context, salvation was often a community event. The major events in the life of Israel, which contained God's salvation for his people, was the deliverance of the people from Egypt. After the Exodus, Moses and the people of Israel sang this song: "The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my *salvation*. He is my God, and I will praise Him" (Exodus 15:2 Jewish Publication Society). In the Prophets, God's post-exilic salvation meant a restoration of the ruined and devastated cities (see Amos 9:13-15).[112]

---

[108] Michael Berry, *Foundation for Restoration* (Bedford, TX: Revival Press, 1988), 256-62.

[109] Rousas John Rushdoony, *Salvation and Godly Rule* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1983), 1.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 37-38.

[112] Ibid., 38.

In the New Testament, the concept of salvation also takes on a wider meaning, which included primarily the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ for the individual, but also extended to the salvation of society.[113] As a nation, Israel understood salvation as restoration of their kingdom after being liberated from the Roman Empire. This is why the disciples asked, "Lord, will you at this time restore (*αποκαθιστανεις*) the kingdom to Israel?"[114]

> The motif of Israel's salvation or restoration is more prominent in the Gospel of Luke than the other gospels. . . . This motif especially comes to the fore in Luke's account of Zechariah's prophecy in Luke 1.68-79. Zechariah refers to God who visited and redeemed (*λύτρωσις*) Israel (v. 68), to the "horn of salvation" for God's people (v. 69), to Israel's salvation (*σωτηρία*) from their enemies (v. 71) and to John the Baptist, who would give the people the knowledge of salvation (*σωτηρία*) in/by the forgiveness of their sins (v. 77). Luke 2.10-11, which forms part of Luke's account of Jesus' birth, reports of the angel of the Lord who appeared to the shepherds, telling them about the Savior (σωτήρ) who was born in the city of David (v. 11) for the whole people (v. 10). According to Luke 2.25-38 reports of Simeon who waited for the consolation (*παρακλησις*) of Israel (v. 25), for seeing the Lord's salvation (*σωτηρισς*, v. 30), for the glory (*δόξα*) of the Lord's people Israel (v. 32), and for the redemption (*λυτρώσεως*) of Jerusalem (v. 38). According to Luke 24.21, the travelers to Emmaus, in their conversation with Jesus, referred to their hope that Messiah would redeem (λυτροω) Israel.[115]

Within Second Temple Judaism, the central idea of salvation among the Jewish people was that Messiah's work had to do with the salvation of a city (Jerusalem) and a nation (ancient Israel). In some Jewish texts, the central figure in these events of the last days is called the Messiah, which means "the anointed one." Some texts, like the Psalms

---

[113] Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 38.

[114] Acts 1:6. The word restore (*αποκαθιστανεις*) in the Greek can be translated as "Lord, are you *restoring* the kingdom?" Here the disciples were thinking not of a kingdom of God embracing all humanity, but of a Second Temple Judaism "salvation" concept of a sovereignty restored to Israel.

[115] Philip La G. Du Toit, "Reconsidering the Salvation of Israel in Luke-Acts," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (October 2020), 1-2, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0142064X20962662?journalCode=jnta.

of Solomon, describe the Messiah as a human figure descended from David.[116] Psalms of Solomon 17:21-22, 32 describes a Davidic, Messianic figure who will purge Jerusalem of Gentiles, gather the exiles and lead them in righteousness, and shepherd the Lord's flock in righteousness. This lengthy Psalm draws on the Psalm 72 and is witness to fervent messianic hopes among some strands of early Judaism.

The belief that Messiah would appear soon and liberate Jerusalem from their Roman oppressors culminated in the first Jewish Revolt and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.[117] The defenders of Jerusalem considered Herod a foreign invader and the capture of the city must have appeared as an apocalyptic invasion anticipated by the Hebrew prophets. Josephus wrote, "Now the Jews that were enclosed within the walls of the city fought against Herod with great alacrity and zeal (for the whole nation was gathered together); they also gave out many prophecies about the temple, and many things agreeable to the people, as if God would deliver them out of the dangers they were in"[118]

There are two important items in this description. First, the whole nation was gathered and fought against Herod with zeal. Second, Psalm of Solomon indicates the son of David who is coming will smash the arrogant sinners (17:22-24) and gather "a holy (*ekklesia*) people" whom he will lead in righteousness (17:26).[119] Allowing for obvious

---

[116] Neil Godfrey, "Messiahs and Eschatology in Second Temple Judaism," Vridar, December 4, 2018, https://vridar.org/2018/12/04/messiahs-and-eschatology-in-second-temple-judaism.

[117] Phillip J. Long, "The Context of Psalm of Solomon 17," Reading Acts, August 6, 2018, https://readingacts.com/2018/08/06/the-context-of-psalm-of-solomon-17.

[118] Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews,* ed. William Whiston (Farmingdale, NY: First Rate Publishers, 2013) *Ant*. 14.16.1, §470.

[119] Ibid.

exaggeration, Messiah would soon appear and lead a zealous gathering to resist the foreign Roman invader.

The greatest dilemma in soteriology is the lack of clear and precise biblical delineations for the manner and means of salvation. At times, biblical salvation may refer to physical deliverance (Ex. 15:2; Phil. 1:19), victorious acts (Ps. 44:4), wellbeing (Job 30:15), health (Acts 27:34), and healing (Jn. 11:12; Acts 4:9), as well as the complete reconciliation and restoration with God familiar to most modern Christians. In the Bible, salvation is paradoxical: at times particular, at times progressive, at times completed past, at times future event; at times related to human acts.[120] At the same time, there are several soteriological certainties the Bible is clear concerning: salvation is entirely from God (Ps. 18:2; Rev. 7:10), salvation was God's plan from the beginning (Gen. 3:15; Eph. 1:4-8), salvation is available to the world (Isa. 45:22; Jn. 3:16), and salvation only occurs through the sacrifice of the Christ coming from Israel (Isa. 49:6; 62:11; Acts 4:12), which is why the questions presented by Jesus to his disciples and their answers in Matthew 16:13-20 are important to our application of epidemiology to our understanding of soteriology.[121]

Unlike Second Temple Messianic expectations, many pagan concepts of salvation, liberation, and deliverance were based on doctrines of escape.[122] It is a natural human tendency to seek pleasure and avoid problems. Much of our lives are shaped

---

[120] Douglas Estes, "Soteriology," in *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*. Vol. 4, ed. George Thomas (Malden, MA: Kurian Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 2215.

[121] Estes, "Soteriology."

[122] Paula Fredriksen, "The Empire's Religions," PBS, April 1998, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/portrait/empire.html.

around this instinct. We're innately inclined to turn away from what hurts and to seek safety in what's pleasurable and familiar. But moving through life along the path of least resistance comes with a certain set of consequences. The reality is, problems in life are fundamentally inescapable.[123] In Matthew 16:18-19 Jesus presented a clear challenge with his words at Caesarea Philippi. He did not want his followers hiding from evil; instead, He wanted them to storm the gates of hell. Rather than trying to escape the problems of His time, standing as they were at a literal "Gate of Hades," the disciples may have been overwhelmed by Jesus' challenge.

They had studied under their rabbi for several years and now he was commissioning them to a huge task—to attack evil. The Greek term that is almost always translated as "evil" or "wicked" is *poneros*, which means "oppressed by toil," "burdened," and "worthless." There is no sense of malevolence in the word. Jesus promised to give keys to his ekklesia to engage the very places that were most filled with idolatry and moral corruption. This is why churches cannot remain siloed, disengaged, and disconnected from the broken, problem filled, communities and neighborhoods that Jesus has called them to serve.

Jesus did not lead his disciples to the Temple, a local synagogue, or religious community. He led them to a Greco-Roman worship site that venerated gods who offered people a means of escape. As Jesus stood in front of the rock formations and grottos of idolatry in Caesarea Philippi, he offered them an epidemiological approach where ungodly values dominated. Each of these gods was introduced in the rock formations of

---

[123] Denise Fournier, "Why We Should Stop Running from Pain," Psychology Today, August 2, 2020, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mindfully-present-fully-alive/202008/why-we-should-stop-running-pain.

the city filled with idols that provided a differing Greco-Roman idea of *salvation* through various gods intervening in their community or individual problems. Instead of getting to the roots of their problems (as practiced in epidemiology) and resolving them, a means of escape was provided.[124] As the disciples arrived at the site, they were probably stirred by the contrast between Jesus, as the Son of Man, and the false hopes of the pagans who trusted in dead gods.[125] For them, salvation was defined as the redemption and return to the Jewish state as it was during the Hasmonean period.

Conclusion

During COVID-19, many churches have not known what to do other than building effective food banks and pointing people to homeless shelters. Others have done nothing to assist the communities they have been called to serve and have complained about their church facilities being closed for worship, their First Amendment rights being violated,[126] and refusing to comply[127] or assist public health agencies. However, a growing number of churches are offering ministries of health, usually initiated by healthcare professionals and organized around a variety of models. Government, academic, and nonprofit organizations have recognized the faith community as important

---

[124] Rushdoony, *Salvation and Godly Rule,* 1.

[125] "City of Pagans," That the World May Know, accessed December 10, 2020, https://www.thattheworldmayknow.com/ gates-of-hell-article.

[126] Mark Wingfield, "LA County Pursues Contempt of Court Case Against MacArthur," Baptist News, August 20, 2020, https://baptistnews.com/article/la-county-pursues-contempt-of-court-case-against-macarthur/#.X84VAy1h1QY.

[127] "Official Statement Regarding the Lawsuit Against Gov. Newsom," Harvest Rock Church, accessed December 4, 2020, https://harvestrock.church/official-statement-regarding-the-lawsuit-against-gov-newsom.

partners in improving the health of communities, due to their wide influence and ability to access hard-to-reach groups. For years, churches have had the opportunity to claim their role in promoting health in a rapidly changing healthcare environment.[128]

This important perspective should prod us to move out of our comfort zones of a spiritual individualism and toward a vision of salvation as large as God's mission to the world he loves and redeems.[129] As Mark Sheerin writes: "Jesus came to earth not just to patch up a relationship between mankind and an offended Father, but to radically reconcile all things to himself. He came to bring redemption to communities, institutions and individuals, to the realms of justice and law, to education and child-rearing, to farms, to cities, to finance - to everything. Jesus came to undo the shattered world in which man stands alone and isolated."[130] Alister Petrie writes that God loves our communities (see Ps. 107:6-7, Prov. 11:10-11). He places people in communities (see Ps. 107:7; John 14:1; Acts 17:26). He wants to save entire communities (see Isaiah 66:8; Jonah 4:9-11, Micah 4:1-3). Jesus' life was shaped in a local community, the city of Nazareth. Jesus wept over a city-Jerusalem. (see Luke 19:41) In the early apostolic mission, communities were targeted for the mission (see Zeph. 2:11; 8:20-23). God is concerned about the quality of our lives in the places where we live (see Neh. 1-2).[131] And God is concerned that

---

[128] Mary Chase-Ziolek, "(Re)Claiming the Church's Role in Promoting Health: A Practical Framework," *Journal of Christian Nursing* 32, no. 2 (April/June 2015): 100-07.

[129] John G. Stackhouse, Jr, ed., *What Does It Mean to be Saved? Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 10.

[130] Mark Sheerin, "Why I Left World Vision for Finance," Christianity Today, February 22, 2013, https://www.christianitytoday.com/thisisourcity/7thcity/why-i-left-world-vision-for-finance.html.

[131] Alister Petrie, "God's View of a City," in *Reclaiming Our Spiritual Heritage*, ed. Michael Berry (Annapolis, MD: C3 Publications, 2003), 4.

churches be His ambassadors of reconciliation who bring healing and wholeness to others (Acts 3:1-10; 2 Cor. 5:18-19).

With rampant problems affecting all segments of America, churches have the opportunity to be a beacon of hope by leveraging their resources and influence to affect positive health and wellbeing. This is best achieved when the gospel is contextualized and doctrines such as soteriology and eschatology are utilized in such a way as to bring wholeness to communities. Instead of being disconnected from their communities, churches that employ health models[132] to bring healing to their cities are following in the Scriptural metanarrative of restoration and Jesus' ministry of healing (see Appendix C).

[132] For example, see the Michigan Health Improvement Alliance at https://mihia.org.

CHAPTER 5

CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE: DEVELOPING CULTURAL COMPETENCE FOR CONTEXTUALIZING THE GOSPEL

Most of the world's population now lives in urbanized areas filled with distinct and diverse communities. The emerging urban experience is presenting the church and civic sectors challenging fractures fueled by a myriad of problems. Increasing urban problems are larger than any one church's capacity and resources to adequately bring community transformation. Most Christian leaders recognize the problem facing local churches today. For much of the history of the Church, despite varied perspectives of *missio Dei*, it has focused on internal needs while maintaining a cultural privilege in society. As American culture is becoming post-Christian, we must ask "What will the church do?" Unsure of the answer, local churches do not know if they are supposed to battle the culture, defeat it, slay it, withdraw from it, or embrace it.[1]

The decline of Christendom offers churches a unique opportunity to rediscover their missional mandate as a people sent by God into the world as gospel witnesses. In fact, research has demonstrated that the Christian faith may be particularly effective in setting moral norms, building social ties, and provides communities a sense of meaning and purpose.[2] It is very impressive and noble when one local church provides numerous activities for the communities, but there is almost no coordination between churches and often no cross-cultural relationships, partnerships with civic authorities, or private sectors

---

[1] Ed Stetzer, "Evangelicals, Culture, and Post Christian America," *Christianity Today* (May 20, 2015).

[2] Jeffrey T. Ulmer and Casey T. Harris, "Race and the Religious Contexts of Violence: Linking Religion and White, Black, and Latino Violent Crime," *The Sociological Quarterly* 4 (Fall 2013): 610-46.

to pull together resources for the benefit of community needs.[3] The purpose of this chapter is to provide a way forward from behind the enclaves of our church buildings to lay a foundation for contextualizing the gospel through the use of ecclesiology, ethnography, and epidemiology as a missional paradigm to provide a system of culturally-competent pastoral care throughout the entire city.

As American society has become more heterogeneous, cross-culture effectiveness has emerged as an essential skill for all service providers.[4] Everyone has an ethnic, linguistic, and racial identity. We are all products of one or more cultures, language, and racial groups.[5] Culture is a shared, socially-learned knowledge, lived experience, that helps you navigate your society and provides guidelines for interaction with others. Culture may operate on three levels: (1) behaviors that are learned; (2) ideas that reinforce beliefs; and (3) products that reinforce beliefs.[6] Working effectively in our communities requires cultural competence.[7]

All cultures are based on values and beliefs. Values are a culture's standard for discerning what is societally good and just. Values are deeply embedded and critical for transmitting and teaching a culture's beliefs. Beliefs are the tenets or convictions that people hold to be true. Individuals in a society can hold specific beliefs, but they also can

---

[3] Sutton, *A Gathering Momentum*, 19-20.

[4] Eleanor W. Lynch and Marci J Hanson, *Developing Cross-cultural Competence: A Guide For Working With Children And Their Families*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, 2004), 7.

[5] Lynch and Hanson, *Developing Cross-cultural Competence,* 20.

[6] Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 24.

[7] Alan Roxburgh, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing The World: The New Shape of the Church in our Time* (New York: Morehouse, 2015), 6.

share common values.[8] Values portray an ideal culture or standards society would like to embrace and live up to. However, ideal culture differs from real culture, the way society actually is. In an ideal culture, there would be no traffic accidents, murders, poverty, or racial tension. In real culture, police officers, lawmakers, and social workers continuously strive to prevent or repair those accidents, crimes, and injustices.[9] Since the 1970s, many scholars have explored ideas about culture and context. These include understandings of ethnicity, community values, historical perspectives, and modes of communication. Cultural research has sought to understand the complex dynamics between culture, context, and learning.[10]

Before seeking to contextualize the gospel, we need to answer this question: "What context are we working to identify?" Every community is made up of diverse beliefs, underlying experiences, upbringing, and habits that shape its culture. Many factors can affect cross-cultural interactions. Being insensitive to a community's history, cultural perspective, and bias can lead to a variety of problems for contextualizing the gospel. Past missiological (mis)practices have demonstrated that Christendom has engaged in colonization and is complicit in the deconstruction of cultures. With the increasing urbanization and diversity of our city populations, it requires us to know our communities, respect and value it's people, learn their stories, historical and cultural

---

[8] R. Adam Dastrup, "Understanding Culture," Introduction to Human Geography, accessed December 14, 2020, https://humangeography.pressbooks.com/chapter/understanding-culture.

[9] Ibid.

[10] National Academies, *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures* (Washington, DC National Academies Press, 2018), https://www.nap.edu/read/24783/chapter/4.

perspectives in order to reach them with the gospel. Understanding culture is a process. Learning to read a community involves:

- **Cultural Knowledge**—knowing a community's worldview, history, signs, and symbols that construct its reality.
- **Cultural Awareness**—being cognizant, observant, and conscious of differences.
- **Cultural Sensitivity**—knowing cultural differences without assigning values to the differences.
- **Cultural Competence**—ability to bring together different behaviors, attitudes and perspectives in order to work effectively in cross-cultural settings to better contextualize our urban work. Contextualization requires the task of semiology, theology, sociology, cultural hermeneutics and exegesis in our urban settings.[11]

Valuing diversity means accepting and respecting differences between and within cultures. We often presume a common culture is shared between members of racial, linguistic, and religious groups, but this may not be true. A group might share historical and geographical experiences but individuals may share only physical appearance, language, or spiritual beliefs. Our cultural assumptions can lead us to wrong conclusions. As people move to new areas and meld with other cultures, they need to develop contextual intelligence and cultural competence before they engage in any work of community transformation.[12]

---

[11] "Chapter 27, Building Culturally Competent Organizations," Community Toolbox, accessed December 15, 2020, https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/culturally-competent-organizations/main.

[12] Community Toolbox, "Chapter 27, Building Culturally Competent Organizations."

What Is Contextual Intelligence?

Contextual Intelligence is the practical application of knowledge and information to real-world situations.[13] It requires understanding the context in which one operates, knowing what works with which persons in each situation. It is more than "knowing what" to do; it is "knowing how" to get it done.[14] Contextual Intelligence is a meta-framework that measures and explains one's ability to reach the cultural divide in ways that are loving, respectful, and honoring the cultural context shared by a people group without colonizing or needing to assimilate them into the church's preferred culture.[15] It means thinking missiologically.[16]

According to Mark Mittleburg, "For those of us who have our sights on reaching secular people, in our increasingly post-Christian society, we must step back and figure out what our cultural mission field's landscape looks like."[17] "Some resist the Gospel not because they believe it false, but because they perceive it as a threat to their own culture, especially the fabric of a society where there is national and tribal solidarity."[18] The goal of any church collective should be neither just to learn more about the cultures in their

---

[13] Alleydog, s.v. "Contextual Intelligence," December 14, 2020, https://www.alleydog.com/glossary/definition-cit.php?term=Contextual+Intelligence.

[14] Charles Brown, "Contextual Intelligence (CI): The Key To Successful Consulting," Head in the Game, accessed December 14, 2020, https://headinthegame.net/resources/library/contextual-intelligence-ci-the-key-to-successful-consulting/.

[15] David A. Livermore, *Cultural Intelligence: Improving Your CQ To Engage Our Multicultural World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 257.

[16] Ed Stetzer and David Pullman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 2.

[17] Stetzer and Pullman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 2.

[18] Bruce J. Nichols, *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1979), 9.

communities nor just to become better at navigating cultural differences. Missional minded churches serving their neighborhood can expand their cultural knowledge, awareness, sensitivity, and competence. Understanding culture is a process.[19]

What Is Cultural Competence and Why Do We Need It?

The U. S. Department Of Health And Human Services defines cultural competence as a "set of behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency, or program or amount of individuals, enabling them to function effectively in diverse cultural interactions and similarities within, among and between diverse groups.[20] Cultural Competence is the ability to bring together different behaviors, attitudes, and perspectives in order to work effectively in cross-cultural settings to contextualize better our urban work. The earliest Christian missional accounts in the New Testament demonstrates the importance of Cultural Intelligence. Cultural Intelligence has been defined as "a meta-framework that measures and explains one's ability to reach across the chasm of cultural differences"[21] whether the culture is socio-ethnic, organizational, generational, religious, political, or family.

Each expresses their own cultural values that leads people to see their identity in light of a group. The most commonly cited aspects of culture are the most visible: language, music, and food. Anthropologists study additional qualities to develop a deeper understanding of culture, the shared values, traditions, norms and customs, arts, history,

---

[19] Dastrup, "Understanding Culture."

[20] "Definitions of Cultural Competence," National Center for Cultural Competence, accessed December 14, 2020, https://nccc.georgetown.edu/curricula/culturalcompetence.html.

[21] Livermore, *Cultural Intelligence,* 256.

folklore and institutions of a people united by race, ethnicity, language, nationality, religion and other factors.[22]

Unfortunately, too many within today's church's imaginative worldview have been shaped by Eurocentric, sixteenth-century theological conversations, habitual assumptions, and practices that lie deep within their own bias, denominational cultures, and theological enclaves. This restricts openness to cultural engagement. The very idea that Jesus only came only to save us, to make our lives better, change our moral life, and then sends us to heaven without changing society has made the church deficient, ineffective, and alienated from the very people it has been called to serve. Niebuhr commented, "A many-sided debate about the relations of Christianity and civilization is being carried on in our time."[23] Niebuhr was addressing accusations that Christianity has no positive contribution to make to civilization or culture.

This view has re-emerged in current, postmodern context. Like those in Niebuhr's era, postmodern despisers of Christianity argue civilization is the supreme value and that Christianity is essentially a threat to its health. They say that Christians either become so otherworldly that they are irresponsible citizens or they take over civilization and become intolerant. Therefore, Christianity should be subordinate to cultural ideals. Progressive cultural ideals should reign supreme and traditional religion is either best abandoned or brought in line with those higher ideals. Niebuhr's response to this secular culturalist critique led to his famous typologies of the church's relationship with culture. "The relationships of Christianity to culture have always been far more complicated than the

---

[22] Livermore, *Cultural Intelligence,* 256.

[23] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 43-44.

critics recognize. True, some Christians have withdrawn from culture and some have been intolerant, but these are not the only Christian cultural attitudes."[24]

Even when churches have attempted to engage in urban ministry, many recognize the struggles of their own lack of cultural competence to reach, engage, resource, and offer solutions to the myriad of problems within their communities. Despite the emphasis on local churches seeking to become culturally relevant, there is a mammoth disconnect between the church and the communities they are called to serve. The result is very little understanding about how to do urban ministry in an effective way that contextualizes the God's mission in cities.

This is why certain denominations and other groups within American Christianity are not engaged in civil rights, addressing racism, combatting human trafficking, advocating prison reform, or other social justice issues facing today's culture. If local churches are to understand the *missio Dei*, they need to broaden their hermeneutics, theology, philosophies, and semiotics of culture so that they can enhance their cultural competence to reach and bring about transformation effectively in the residents of their diverse communities.

Christianity Has Always Been a Cross-Cultural Movement

From its beginning, Christianity has been global in its faith and practice. And global inevitably means multicultural.[25] Every aspect of the early disciples' lives was culturally challenged by Jesus' assignment for them to "[g]o therefore and make disciples

---

[24] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 43-44.

[25] Andrew F. Walls and Mark R. Gornik, *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017), 2.

of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19-20 BSB). Within twenty years after Jesus gave this missional task to his disciples, Christianity was transformed from a rural, Galilean sect to an urban movement reaching far beyond Palestine.[26]

While there are good reasons to suppose that the vast majority of early Christian converts were Jews, the task of "making disciples in the world," or the "world" (as defined by a Greco-Roman perspective) involved more than offering a faith stripped of ethnic encumbrances. The difficult questions that emerged among these early Jewish believers revolved around how "making disciples" engaged Gentile peoples into the process of their faith with or without having to adopt Jewish culture and customs. Could a missional faith, stripped of its ethnic encumbrances, be offered in good faith? Would these early practicing Jewish Jesus followers ably present their faith in a way that made converts? How could missions work? The capacity to engage peoples from diverse backgrounds with cultural competence has always been crucial in Christian mission.

Every community has its own cultural and historical perspective that has affected and shaped it. It is common for people in diverse ethnic or cultural groups to interpret events differently. Every story in the Bible is rooted in a cultural perspective. The development of Hebrew religion was a long and rocky road. Throughout its own unique history, Israel's debate on the influence, role, and challenge of cross-cultural relationships would result in major shifts in their religion. They understood their God was on mission. Second Temple Judaism was the "first great missionary religion."[27] Their obligation to

---

[26] Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006), 25.

[27] Ibid., 5-6.

missionize has always been implicit in the Hebrew scripture: “I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6 NASB). How they defined this mission was largely defined by the cross-cultural contexts in which they lived.

Biblical perspectives abound with young Israelites assimilating and influencing various cultural contexts (i.e., Joseph in Egypt, Esther in the Medo-Persian empire, Daniel in Babylon). Other Hebrew texts would warn against intermingling with foreign cultures and Hellenization.[28] Yet, first century Judaizers would demand that all “nations” become fully Jewish. Debate regarding the influence, role, and challenge of cross-cultural relationships resulted in major shifts and theological diversity in their religion (the Pharisees, Sadducees, lawyers, scribes, Essene, Judaizers, and mercenaries), Hebrew history has always inspired great debate and revolutions in defining their understanding of *missio Dei*. Jesus envisioned his mission to encompass people of every nation, tribe, and language into God’s kingdom.

Both Luke and Acts were written with conviction that Christ belonged to all humanity. Jesus’ mandate to his followers to be witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) was a challenge for them to interact with cultures other than their own.[29] Similarly, the diversity of today’s communities and urban cities require churches to learn more about the cross-cultural history and perspectives in the communities in order to minister to their neighborhoods. However, our goal is neither

---

[28] Deuteronomy 20:16-17; 1 Maccabees 1:14-24.

[29] Osoba O. Otaigbe, *Building Cultural Intelligence in Church and Ministry: 10 Ways to Assess and Improve Your Cross-Cultural Competence in Church, Ministry and The Workplace* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2016), 5.

simply to learn more about cultures nor only to become better at navigating cultural differences.[30] We must see our own collectivism, attitudes, behavior, and move beyond our cultural biases to fulfill this mandate in the neighborhoods Jesus has called us to.

Mark Powell has demonstrated how our own cultural perspectives shapes, interprets, and influences our application of these stories of Jesus.[31] In his research of how one's own cultural perspective pervades thinking, speech, and behavior without a person's being aware of this pervasion, he wrote about an experiment of twelve American theological students who were given the parable of the Prodigal Son to read, reflect on, and share their perspectives. Not one of them referred to the famine in Luke 15:14 as the cause of why the prodigal son was in the pig house. For them the prodigal squandered his money. When the same experiment was conducted in Russia and Tanzania, students in both countries identified this important detail.

In Russia, they focused on the famine because of their past history of national starvation. Tanzania's main cultural background is Ubuntu: "I am because we are." Even though this culture is very different from both the American and Russian context, they also focused on the famine. However, their focus was on the fact that nobody gave the prodigal anything to eat.[32] Cultural, biblical and theological bias may be linked to a faith-communities specific approaches and effectiveness in urban ministry. Practitioners engaged in community transformation must not only know text, but also the context. They will want to access insight into urban sociology and anthropology, city systems,

---

[30] Livermore, *Cultural Intelligence*, 12.

[31] Mark Allan Powell, *What Do They Hear? Bridging the Gap Between Pulpit and Pew* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 4-5.

[32] Ibid., 12.

religious and historical contexts of the city, its needs, and its assets. Urban ministry practitioners must have an overall view of their neighborhoods reflecting on the *anima* (the unconscious worldview/spirituality of the city), the *civitas* (the behaviors), and the *urbs* (infrastructures).[33] Other important cultural studies may include place and the underlying philosophies that make up the personality of our communities.

Jesus was culturally competent. He said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (Matthew 15:24 NIV). As a Galilean, he made his home in a community where some northern kingdom exiles may have returned after the Maccabean revolt. This was the venue that Jesus spent most of his ministry and explains what he meant by the phrase "the lost sheep of the House of Israel." He was called to minister in the cultural land of the 10 northern tribes who were excluded by Judah. Yet, He did not exclude them, the Samaritans, Canaanites, or even Romans when they reached out for his help. He knew how to love his neighbors and minister to them. In John 4, Jesus meets a Samaritan woman. She represents the consummate "outsider" within Second Temple Judaism definitions of *who's in, who's out*, and *who is* to be embraced or excluded from the faith community. This is evidence by the Samaritan woman's remark: "Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain. But you Jews say that people must worship in Jerusalem" (John 4:20 KJV).

As he listened, Jesus understood the historical backgrounds underlying the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom proffering perspectives within the Hebrew faith and the multicultural context of Galilee. He responded to her perspective and bias effectively. He told her:

---

[33] Lausanne Movement, "Towards the Transformation of Our Cities/Regions (LOP 37)."

> Believe me. A time is coming when you Samaritans won't be worshiping the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You don't know what you're worshiping. We [Jews] know what we're worshiping, because salvation comes from the Jews. Indeed, the time is coming, and it is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. The Father is looking for people like that to worship him. God is a spirit. Those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24 BSB).

His approach offered her an opportunity to be embraced and included in His understanding of the beloved faith-community. All culture is "rooted" in ideas (including community stories, beliefs, values, attitudes, rules of behavior), rituals and material objects, and symbols that become a source of identity for us.

Jesus understood why the Father sent him into the world. He aligned himself with this mission and taught his disciples to do the same. Everything he did, taught, and was recorded in the Gospels was focused on accomplishing the mission He was sent for. At the end of His life, he prayed to the Father, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4 NIV). Yet, Jesus' commissioning to his disciples to "[g]o and disciple the nations" required these early leaders to move their ministry from a small, rural Jewish context into the diverse, urban contexts throughout the Roman Empire. This required personal, cultural intelligence and developing the necessary skills for cultural competency so that they would not alienate the very people they were called to reach with their faith.

In order to build communities that are successful at improving conditions and resolving problems, we need to understand and appreciate many cultures, establish relationships with people from differing cultures, and build strong alliances with various cultural groups. We need to bring non-mainstream groups into the center of civic

activity.[34] When explaining the early beginnings of Christianity to Theophilus, Luke distinguished the Christian mission as a movement of courageous actions by many individuals who were willing to step outside of their comfort zones.[35] Throughout these texts, Luke explains how these early followers of Jesus accepted the challenge to learn community competence. In Acts 10, Peter encountered a vision of unclean animals that challenged him to cross his own cultural boundaries. At first, Peter reacted, "Surely not, Lord!" (Acts 10:14 NIV). His decision to move out of his comfort zone was a critical moment in the gospel's movement into the Gentile world. Culture has always been a strong part of people's lives. It influences a person's views, values, humor, hopes, loyalties, worries, and fears.[36] When working with people of diverse backgrounds to build relationships, it helps to develop a pastoral understanding of their cultures in order to be able to contextualize the gospel.

Conclusion

As an unsiloed church works with other congregations (as an ekklesia) across denominational and cultural divides, ethnography (as defined in chapter 3) and epidemiology (as defined in chapter 4) can only be effective as the church has developed it's own contextual intelligence and cultural competence. It must be stressed that this is

---

[34] "Chapter 27, Understanding Culture and Diversity in Building Communities," Community Toolbox, accessed December 15, 2020, https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/culture-and-diversity/main.

[35] Acts 1:1-7; 17:16-32.

[36] Community Toolbox, "Chapter 27, Understanding Culture and Diversity in Building Communities."

long-term work; this is not a short burst of activity.[37] Rather than trying to apply a received theology to a local context, a new kind of missional paradigm (based on ecclesiology, ethnography, and epidemiology) as discussed in previous chapters, an examination of the context itself affords a city-wide church collective the opportunity to promote a culture of belonging, inclusion, and trust-building so that the gospel can be contextualized effectively. An important challenge for connecting and engaging our communities, which will be discussed in the final chapter, has to do with how to develop this framework for collaboration.

[37] Sutton, *A Gathering Momentum*, 232.

CHAPTER 6

A NEW KIND OF PARISH: THE CHURCH THAT I SEE

What happens when governments and institutions have no answers for cities, communities, and neighborhoods that begin to deteriorate and the quality of life is disrupted by addiction, crime, violence, racism, marriage and family breakdowns, fatherlessness, human trafficking, failing medical systems, and community programs that fail to work? Bishop Angel Nunez, an organizer with the Multicultural Prayer Movement in Baltimore said, "You can throw all the government money in the world at the problem and it does not work."[1] Baltimore city and Baltimore county have been given $4.6 million to reduce gun violence and curb crime,[2] yet, Baltimore has one of the highest crime rates in America compared to all communities of all sizes.[3] Former Southern Baptist President Ronnie Floyd says, "Ultimately, we believe the local church can play a real catalytic role in bringing unity in a city, dealing with some of those difficult situations today."[4]

Ephesian 3:10 says that "His intent was that now, through the church [*εκκλησία*], the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities" (NIV). This is exactly what Jesus was pointing out to his disciples in Matthew 16:13-20. The

---

[1] "The Reconciled Church March 2017 Panel Discussion," The Reconciled Church, July 24, 2017, video, 1:04:26, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o80onGODmgQ.

[2] Jessica Anderson, "$4.6 Million in Grant Funds Will Go to Fight Crime in Baltimore City and Baltimore County," Baltimore Sun, December 16, 2019, https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-cr-grant-money-20191216-6arlnutw4fbhjfwzzh5rem45ha-story.html.

[3] "Baltimore, MD Crime Rates," Neighborhood Scout, accessed December 21, 2020, https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/md/baltimore/crime.

[4] Samuel Smith, "Church Leaders Unite to Heal Nation's Racial Divide," Christian Post, October 29, 2015, https://www.christianpost.com/news/ronnie-floyd-southern-baptists-racial-reconciliation-church.html.

purpose of his coming, and confirmed by his disciple's affirmation in the Grotto of Pan, was to bring healing, salvation, and community transformation through his ekklesia to cities like Caesarea Philippi. The Church is called to be a transformational change agent that "the Gates of Hell" cannot even contend with. However, this is not a new concept or understanding of the role of the Church. Throughout the ages, in spite of other ecclesiologies, the Church has been involved in the life of humankind, in the making of nationhood, building of culture, structuring of society with its functions and institutions, and in shaping the form and quality of healthy political systems.[5] Jesus' Church has normally understood the transformation of society to be an essential part of its mission task.[6] John Wesley said, "The world is my parish!"[7]

In Wesley's eighteenth-century Anglican Church context, a parish was a geographical area divided up by the Church where a parish priest was responsible for the pastoral work of a specific jurisdiction. A parish's association with the parish church remains paramount.[8] By extension, the term parish refers not only to the territorial entity but to the people in its community or congregation as well as to church property within it. In England, this church property was owned by the parish's congregation but was stewarded as a state church under the authority of the crown. Wesley's words reveal his

---

[5] "In Western European Countries With Church Taxes, Support for the Tradition Remains Strong," Pew Forum, April 30, 2019, https://www.pewforum.org/2019/04/30/in-western-european-countries-with-church-taxes-support-For-the-tradition-remains-strong.

[6] Pew Forum, "In Western Countries with Church Taxes, Support for the Tradition Remains Strong."

[7] Ron Blake, "The World Is My Parish or My Parish Is the World," Wesley's Horse, October 29, 2017, http://wesleyshorse.com/the-world-is-my-parish-or-my-parish-is-the-world/.

[8] Michael Trueman, "When Parishes Merge or Close," Catholic Answers, July 1, 2007, https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/when-parishes-merge-or-close.

passion for the gospel, engaging in field preaching after he concluded his "parish" ministry. He ministered to anyone and in all the places in which he traveled. He was not satisfied by being "siloed" (isolated by other parishes) in one parish where he could have spent his life being assigned. Throughout Western Europe, parishes could be Catholic or Protestant. Several European countries like Denmark, Sweden, and throughout Germany still have a parish system supported by the state.[9] In a recent interview with one of my seminary colleagues, Johannes Vogelbusch, I explored how this parish system operates.

Vogelbusch is an ordained member of the clergy in the Evangelische Reichskirche (German Protestant Evangelical Church) which is historically the main, state-supported, Protestant denomination in Germany. Currently, Johannes serves a rural Protestant diocese (or parish), with over 2000 members, in Haus Ley, Engelskirchen (with a general population of a little under 20,000) just east of Cologne, Germany. Funding for the church and its ministries are taken out of *declared* parish members' paychecks as a tax by the government and then used for parish costs to serve everyone in the community, whether they are members or not. His particular parish membership has about 8% participating in lay ministries that serve the elderly, run various adult groups in the church, and assist in raising funds for the church's work throughout the church and greater community.

Johannes explained that he has responsibilities both within and outside the church that keeps him very busy. First, as with most lead pastors in The German Protestant Church, he is responsible for all worship services, confirmation classes, weddings,

---

[9] Pew Forum, "In Western Countries with Church Taxes, Support for the Tradition Remains Strong."

baptisms, funerals, adult Bible studies. He is responsible for conducting oversight of all church business and day-to-day operations with the elders, and facilitating the church's business meetings. Outside the church, he is responsible to oversee the church's social service and welfare programs assigned to him by the denomination. After just listening to everything that he was responsible for, it is no wonder why so many pastors and churches are siloed because of the amount of work they are engaged in that prevents them from taking on other projects.

This is why no one church has the resources, abilities, or capacity within itself to meet all the needs of an entire city. Johannes went on to expound that the church's "Diakonissin" (deacons) were responsible for all social services in the parish, the homeless, job employment of people with special needs, and the handicapped, and those who do not have enough support from the government. Specific offerings are taken during worship services to supplement low-income people with housing costs, food, and assistance.

I asked him about any processes that were in place for accessing the needs of the community through surveying and data collection. He got very excited about this new program, which I would describe as similar to the public health model I am advancing in this thesis. They have employed a community organizer who has the responsibility to go through the neighborhoods to survey what the residents of Engelskirchen think are the top needs in their community to ensure that the church's resources are being directed toward the real needs of their neighborhoods. Very excitedly, he told me one story of a neighboring village having had only two pubs and a vacant school that the community wanted to address. The parish worked together to save one pub and keep it open and a

parish architect went to work with the parish and redesigned the old school to be repurposed as apartments for the elderly. Johannes said, “After all, as Christians, we are called to take care of our neighbors.” In his view, this is one example of how the gospel is contextualized. He continued: “It has been discovered through surveys that the Church has the highest trust of any other organization in our nation.”

Johannes turned the conversation back to what he thought was one of the most exciting and promising aspects of his work: hiring a community organizer. “The job of our new community organizer is to invite 50 people at a time to meet together with him to discuss the quality of life within their neighborhoods and what do they see are the needs of the greater community.” “As a church,” Johannes said, “we are not presenting ourselves to offer any solutions but simply to ask the community what they think the problems are and invite them to join with us in addressing those needs.” Many of those invitees often end up volunteering to work with the local parish church in finding solutions. Johannes said that after two years of completing ethnographies in our community, the church will hire a “geologist”[10] who will map the community to track where the root of the problems stems from and then seek to answer questions such as Why here? Why now? He said the “geologist studies the neighborhood. Then this person will map what institutions, programs, resources the community currently has and what might be needed to offer solutions.”[11] This is very similar to the public health model (based on epidemiology) that is used here in the United States.

---

[10] This is a difficult term to translate an equivalent word from German into English.

[11] Rev. Johannes Vogelbusch, interview with author via WhatsApp, December 21, 2020.

I turned our conversation to inquire if the Roman Catholic and Free Church movements in Germany were partnering together with his parish in this work, overseeing programs, and delegating out segments of the work to various neighboring churches. Johannes told me that there were two organizations in his region that were attempting to bring together pastors and various churches. One group is ACK, which stands as a Council For Christian Churches In Germany, which was designed to:

- Mutual exchange of information, consultation, and cooperation in common witness, service, and prayer;
- Support of cooperation among the churches on local, regional and international levels;
- Promotion of theological discussion among members for clarification and understanding;
- Counseling and mediating in disputes between individual members;
- Handling the special concerns of individual members at their request;
- Advocating of and representing common interests and activities to the general public;
- Handling the common concerns of the member churches towards political institutions;
- Informing the general public about ecumenical events and activities, the current state of ecumenical efforts, as well as the encouragement of ecumenical responsibility.[12]

---

[12] "Council of the Churches in Germany," 2007, https://www.oekumene-ack.de/uploads/tx_wbpublica/ACK_Broschure_english_version.pdf.

Like many other clergies and community church associations in the USA, the ACK endeavors to establish a theological dialogue among churches for a mutual understanding, to ease tensions between them, to work out joint recommendations, and to make a contribution to the unity of the churches in Germany.[13] Even though these churches were aware of the new approach in community engagement, he believed many would join in the work but at this time had not. Although what he describes as an amazing step forward, Johannes explained his work is very cumbersome due to the bureaucracy of his denomination, state laws, and work of the old European parish model as it has worked for centuries now.[14]

Christians through the ages have maintained community, formation, mission, and worship as the non-negotiable aspects of what it means to be a church. Yet we have often struggled to hold them together meaningfully when those aspects are no longer relevant in our neighborhoods.[15] A great as the work Johaness is doing in his community, no single church can do all the work that is required to meet community needs. We need to expand our vision and efforts to include the whole Body of Christ with a new missional paradigm for the twenty-first century.

First Corinthians 12:21-26 reinforces the importance that all parts of the body are necessary to provide a functioning organism. These verses reveal the error of most churches since we do little together.[16] The Western world keeps people from seeing that

---

[13] "Council of the Churches in Germany."

[14] Ibid.

[15] Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen, *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship, And Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 85.

[16] Dwight Perry, ed., *Building Unity in the Church of the New Millennium* (Chicago: Moody, 2002), 76-77.

their concerns are commonly held by reinforcing the concept of the individual over community.[17] The Pew Research Center reveals that American churches have produced a generation of spiritual consumers who want little more from their religious community than a good pulpiteer, a satisfying worship service, and a congregation filled with nice, friendly members.[18] Pew also found that the top four factors Christians consider in shopping for a church are: quality of sermons (83 percent), feeling welcomed by leaders (79 percent), style of services (74 percent), and location (70 percent).[19] This may be a factor in why so many local churches have become siloed, disconnected, and disengaged trying to meet the demands of consumer-driven church culture they have faced. When the Church exists for nothing greater than itself, an isolation mentality sets in. The natural dynamics of any group is to focus inward.

A church's success can no longer be defined by its assets, its cash, or the numbers of buns on seats, especially when a pandemic like COVID-19 hits a community. COVID-19 has initiated a huge transition that few churches saw coming and is causing many churches to rethink how they do ministry. With church facilities shutting down, people getting comfortable with online services, and learning that their faith is not affected by the inability to attend in-person worship services, there is a real opportunity to redefine how to become a more effective ministry based on ecclesiology, ethnography, and epidemiology as a missional paradigm to improve the gospel's contextualization and work in community transformation.

---

[17] Sparks, Soerens, and Friesen, *The New Parish,* 96.

[18] Regis Nicoll, "The Consumer Driven Church," Crisis Magazine, October 26, 2016, https://www.crisismagazine.com/2016/consumer-driven-church.

[19] Nicoll, "The Consumer Driven Church."

As we have demonstrated, the term *εκκλησία* means "the whole assembly or congregation" of a city or geographical area. In a classical Greek city, a city assembly made up of its citizens would gather together to seek what was best for the welfare of the city, intent on promoting the community's healing and wholeness. When Jesus said he would build his ekklesia, he was promising that his people would be called and engaged in this same work. The unmitigated spread of worldwide diseases should give us pause to consider the welfare of the city. God spoke to exiled Judah through the prophet Jeremiah, saying: "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:7 GWT).[20]

In the biblical sense, seeking welfare has to do with promoting circumstances that allow people to flourish. It means helping people thrive in their homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, economies, and political communities.[21] If these words apply to us today, we can argue whether or not Christians are people in exile. But in our arguing—which is a distraction—let us not lose sight of the character of God contained in the words "seek the peace and prosperity (the welfare) of the city." The concern gripping the world as COVID-19 spreads can give way easily to the sort of fear that drives us to argue with one another. But we do not have that luxury. Now is the time to seek the welfare of "the city"—because we are all living in it.[22]

---

[20] Eric Black, "Editorial: Now's the Time to Seek the Welfare of the City," Baptist Standard, March 11, 2020, https://www.baptiststandard.com/opinion/editorials/nows-the-time-to-seek-the-welfare-of-the-city.

[21] "Seeking the Welfare of the City," Heritage, May 1, 2012, https://www.heritage.org/marriage-and-family/commentary/seeking-the-welfare-the-city.

[22] Heritage, "Seeking the Welfare of the City."

The threat of pandemics has long been a concern for those involved in disaster preparedness. Pandemics have occurred historically with devasting results.[23] Cholera, bubonic plague, smallpox, and influenza are some of the most brutal killers in human history. And outbreaks of these diseases across international borders are properly defined as a pandemic, especially smallpox, which throughout history, has killed between 300-500 million people.[24]

In these times, economies and commerce were disrupted. Businesses closed. Transportation declined. Food was scarce. Church buildings were emptied.[25] When a plague struck Wittenberg during the Protestant Reformation, Luther responded that prayers of faith should be offered up for God's mercy along with responsible practices of sanitation, medication, self-quarantine, and social distancing to help stop the spread in love for others. Yet Luther and his wife Katie did not refuse their own home to those in need of care. In 1918, the Spanish flu killed millions worldwide. Church buildings in affected areas in the U.S. were closed while believers worshipped in houses. Some churches opened their doors to serve as health clinics as hospitals were bursting at the seams with patients. As was often the case, many sacrificed their lives to care for the sick.[26] Certainly, across our communities, all the churches across a community can pool their resources and volunteers and work together with the other sectors of the community

---

[23] Paul R. Williams, *When All Plans Fail: Be Ready for Disaster* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2015), 129.

[24] "Outbreak: 10 of the Worst Pandemics in History," MPH Online, accessed December 22, 2020, https://www.mphonline.org/worst-pandemics-in-history.

[25] Michael Whiting, "Pandemics and the Church: What Does History Teach Us?" Dallas Baptist University, March 30, 2020, https://www.dbu.edu/news/2020/03/pandemics-and-the-church-What-does-history-teach-us.html.

[26] Whiting, "Pandemics and the Church."

in addressing the needs not only in times of pandemics but also with other crisis communities may face.

The problem this project identified is that the Church is siloed, disconnected, and disengaged with its community. To overcome this issue, I have studied how ecclesiology, ethnography, and epidemiology provide a missional paradigm to improve the gospel's contextualization and work towards community transformation. In order to be the kind of Church Jesus called his disciples to be in Matthew 16, I have argued that we cannot remain ensconced in our own buildings. Instead, churches that wish to reflect a true *εκκλησία* will move outside their walls and engage their communities in ways that make tangible differences, both physically and spiritually, as Jesus modeled for us. Therefore, a true, biblical *εκκλησία* requires the following three aspects: the work of ecclesiology, the work of ethnography, and the work of epidemiology.

The Work of Ecclesiology

Biblical ecclesiology engages the whole church in a city to engage in the message of the gospel. This is accomplished by successful implementation of at least four components. The first is faith-rooted organizing that brings people together to create systemic change in their communities and world in a way that is completely shaped and guided by our faith.[27] The staff of the congregation I serve assisted a team of our local ministers working together to begin the process of community organizing in Annapolis. We then identified the pastors, administrators, secretaries, or staff members by contacting

[27] Peter G. Heltzel, "Faith-rooted organizing brings people together to create change," Faith and Leadership, July 14, 2015, https://faithandleadership.com/peter-g-heltzel-faith-rooted-organizing-brings-people-together-create-change.

the church directly. We found 57 congregations existed in our city before the pandemic. We got phone numbers of the pastor or staff, their email, asked for their website and social media sites. After receiving this we developed a survey (Appendix B) for pastors, staff, and members to tell us about the history, ministry, mission, and history of the church to learn specifically about how they engaged they were in the neighborhoods they are called to serve. The goal has been to join all 57 congregations to work together regularly. Currently, there have about 40 churches committed to meeting together as needed. Over the years, the lists are updated to reflect any changes. Our church ministerial association no longer sees 57 individual churches, but rather as one church in the city with 57 campuses to pastor the entire city together.

Our goal is to have every resident have a pastor and church who serves him or her. This involves accomplishing forming a new kind of European style parish dividing up the work and responsibilities to all churches across the whole city so that every citizen is served. In contrast to traditional, individual-focused behavioral change effects, community approaches attempt to alleviate community problems by organizing the community to bring about change. Faith-rooted organizing as a "community of care" begin by building a city-wide ekklesia as discussed in chapter three.

The second necessary component is coalition building. Francis Butterfoss developed the "Community Coalition Action Theory," which provides a theoretical framework for local churches working together and community-wide partnerships to bring people together, expand resources, and focus on a problem of community concern better than any other single group or agency could do alone through coalition building.[28]

---

[28] Butterfoss, *Coalitions and Partnerships in Community Health*, 61-91.

According to Butterfoss, “a community coalition is different from other types of community entities in that a structured arrangement for collaboration among organizations exists in which all members work together toward a common purpose. If a group is composed solely of individuals and not organizations, then it is not a coalition in its truest form.”[29] In this model, every local church wanting to participate across the city would be engaged and working together. It involves empowering members of each church to be engaged in the work of the ministry. Community Coalitions:

1. Develop a framework together for collaboration.
2. Identify obstacles to collaboration.
3. Create a culture for relational unity among the churches.
4. Leverage media to promote collaboration.
5. Implement varied approaches to collaboration.
6. Convene stakeholders in ways that are contextual, manageable, and safe.[30]

Collaboration in the transformation of cities is critical. The church will need to learn to collaborate with one another and the community partners they chose to work with in order to contextualize the gospel and bring about community transformation.

The third necessary component is to identify community stakeholders within the twelve sectors of the city. In every community, there are various access points such as the church, the legal, the political, the medical, the area of education, the marketplace, the media and recreation, and occasionally the armed forces (in Annapolis that includes the

---

[29] Ibid., 71.

[30] Lausanne Movement, “Towards the Transformation of Our Cities/Regions (LOP 37).”

United States Naval Academy).[31] These are all areas of influence, and within each are their differing perspectives, cultures, and leadership. These leaders are known as the gatekeepers or stakeholders of the city. Stakeholders have been defined as any group, organization, or sector of the community with an interest in and/or perspective on a common issue, such as reducing substance abuse.[32]

The fourth component is to take a "Faith Action Audit." This begins with questions like "What is already being done?" and "What resources churches collectively have to meet the needs of the community?" Such an audit identifies who is already working in a sector of the community and who can interface with those stakeholders who have resources, volunteers, programs and funding that may be available to a faith-based initiative.

The Work of Ethnography

Successful ethnography engages the whole church in a city to take the time and effort to understand their community well before embarking on an effort the community needs to pay off in the long-term. Ethnography begins with finding the answers to the questions: What kind of city or community is this? What is its story? Why is this community having the difficulties and challenges that it is facing?

Anything we do in a community requires familiarity with its people, issues, and history. If a community has a problem with homelessness, we need to know why here?

---

[31] Alistair Petrie, *Prophetic Ditch Digging: Preparing for Breakthrough* (Brisbane, AU: CHI Books, 2018), 16.

[32] Arthur T. Dean, *Capacity Primer: Building Membership, Structure and Leadership* (Arlington, VA: CADCA, 2001), 37.

Who makes up the homeless population? A study might focus on people with a gambling problem who came to Atlantic City, spent all their money, and have no means to return home. But in a city like Los Angeles, the homeless population might consist of homeless vets, drug addicts in need of rehabilitation centers or twelve-step programs, or those with mental disabilities needing long-term care facilities.

Ethnography engages a conversation with the community and gives it voice. Chapter four demonstrated that Jesus utilized the rocks, images, architecture, history, theologies, and culture of the city to give voice to his disciples before He asked them, "Who do people say the 'Son of Man' is?" (Matthew 16:13 GWT). Carrying out an intervention, dealing with a community pandemic, or building a coalition is far more likely to be successful if churches are informed by the culture of the community and an understanding of the relationships among individuals and groups within it.[33]

The Work of Epidemiology

Epidemiology begins when the churches make public health a priority. Jesus made healing and salvation a priority. In Mark 1:44, Jesus told the leper that he healed, "Don't tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed" (BSB). Leprosy was a threatening pandemic to communities during Jesus' time. As a slow-developing bacterial disease that causes sores and deformities, leprosy was believed to be a

---

[33] Community Toolbox, "Chapter 27, Understanding Culture and Diversity in Building Communities."

punishment from God that ran in families.[34] If a person became infected, they were quarantined and sent into a leper colony. According to the WHO: (1) Leprosy multiplies slowly and the incubation period of the disease, on average, is 5 years; (2) The disease mainly affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosa of the upper respiratory tract, and the eyes; (3) Leprosy is likely transmitted via droplets, from the nose and mouth, during close and frequent contact with untreated cases (which may warrant wearing masks and social distancing in our time); and (4) Left untreated, leprosy causes progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs, and eyes.[35]

Jesus understood the importance of public health and community welfare in light of Leviticus 14:2-4. All of Leviticus emphasizes public health to God's people. In Luke 17:14, the Ethiopic version reads in the singular number, "to the priest", as in (Matthew 8:4) whose business it was to inspect this matter to see whether a person was healed or not. If he was to pronounce him clean, a gift was offered according to the law. Jesus was careful to ensure the ceremonial law was strictly observed. The ten lepers could not be viewed and examined by the priest simultaneously. Instead, one after another, they were inspected in order to ensure public safety from this communicable disease.[36] Epidemiology provides a foundation for churches to develop and engage healing and wellness ministries in their communities. Epidemiology as a science is concerned with the same things our churches should be concerned with: spiritual wellness, relational

---

[34] "Pandemics that Changed History," History.com, last updated December 21, 2020, https://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/pandemics-timeline.

[35] "Leprosy," World Health Organization, September 10, 2019, https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/leprosy.

[36] "Luke 17:14," Gills Exposition of the Bible, accessed December 20, 2020, https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/luke-17-14.html.

wellness, physical wellness, emotional wellness, and mental wellness. These are the things Jesus was concerned with.[37]

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, research has shown that the solution for (1) a siloed church is re-imagining ecclesiology; (2) a disconnected church is to get to know its community through ethnography; and (3) a disengaged church is to engage in epidemiology as a new missional paradigm for community transformation so that the gospel can be contextualized effectively. A city-transforming church sees its primary role is to be a blessing to the place God has called them to, to be part of the wider Body of Christ, to see more and more of God's kingdom come in their town or city.[38] This is a call for a new kind of parish and a church that I see.

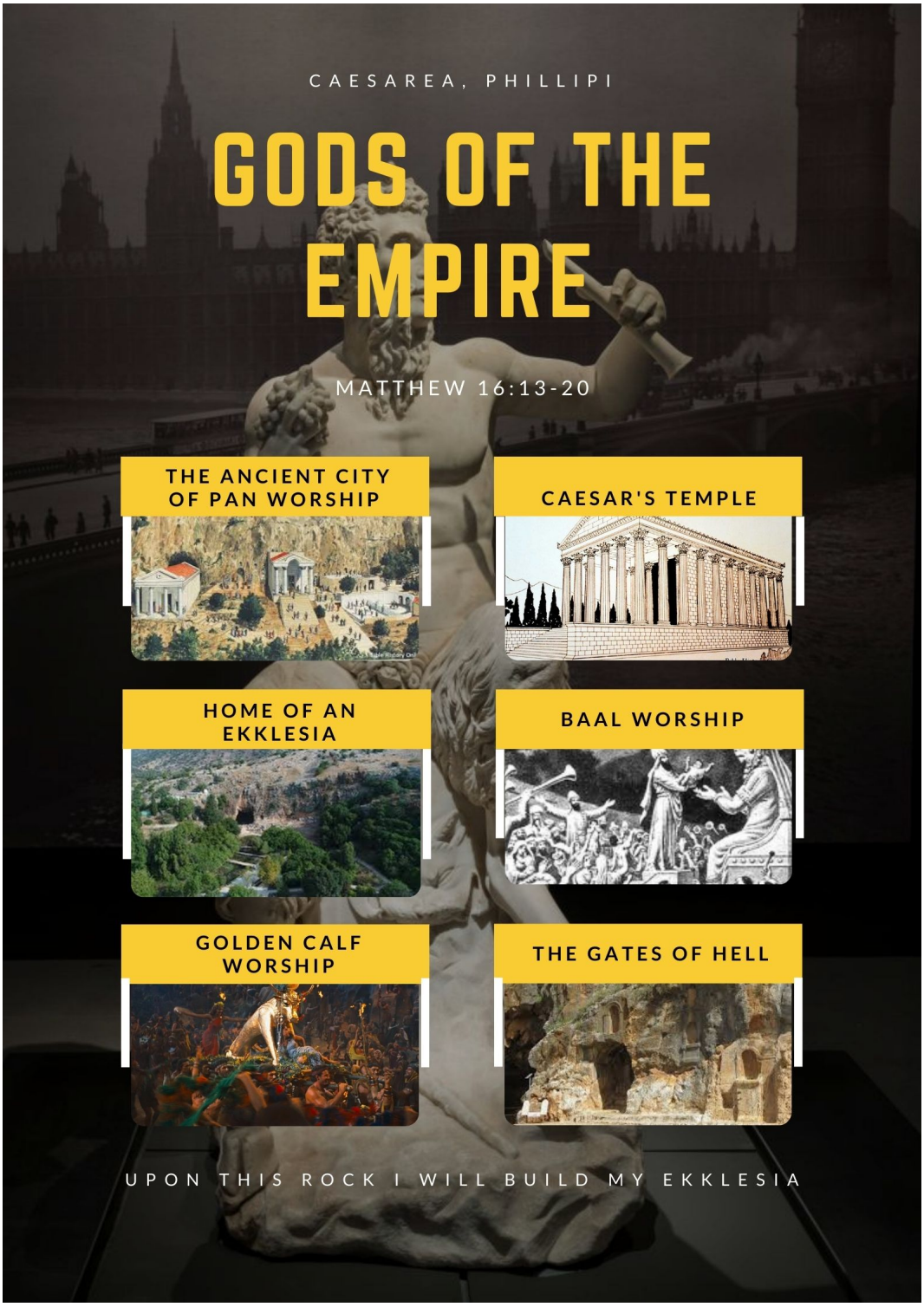
---

[37] See Acts 10:38-43.

[38] Sutton, A Gathering Momentum, 193.

APPENDIX A

Religious Symbols in Caesarea Philippi



APPENDIX B

Area Churches Survey Questions

Questions for congregational membership

- Age ( )

-Gender Identification_____

-Do you commute to church Yes ( ) No ( )

- City or County you live in _____

Questions

1. How connected is your church to the Community it is situated in?

   _____

2. What would you say are the TOP 5 problems in that Community?
   I. _____
   II. _____
   III. _____
   IV. _____
   V. _____
   VI.
3. How engaged is your congregation with the Community?

   _____

4. How long has your Congregation been in Annapolis?

   _____

5. How did your Ministry begin, History?

   _____

   _____

6. What is the focus of your Ministry?

_____

_____

7. Who started it? Why did they start it?

_____

8. Are you a Member? Why? Or Why not?

_____

_____

9. What is your Church's Mission Statement?

_____

_____

10. What is the Vision of your Church?

_____

_____

11. What is your Church's Theology?

_____

_____

12. What resources do you offer your Community?

_____

13. How much time do you personally volunteer?

_____

14. Are you local? Yes ( ) No ( )

15. What High School did you go to?

    _____

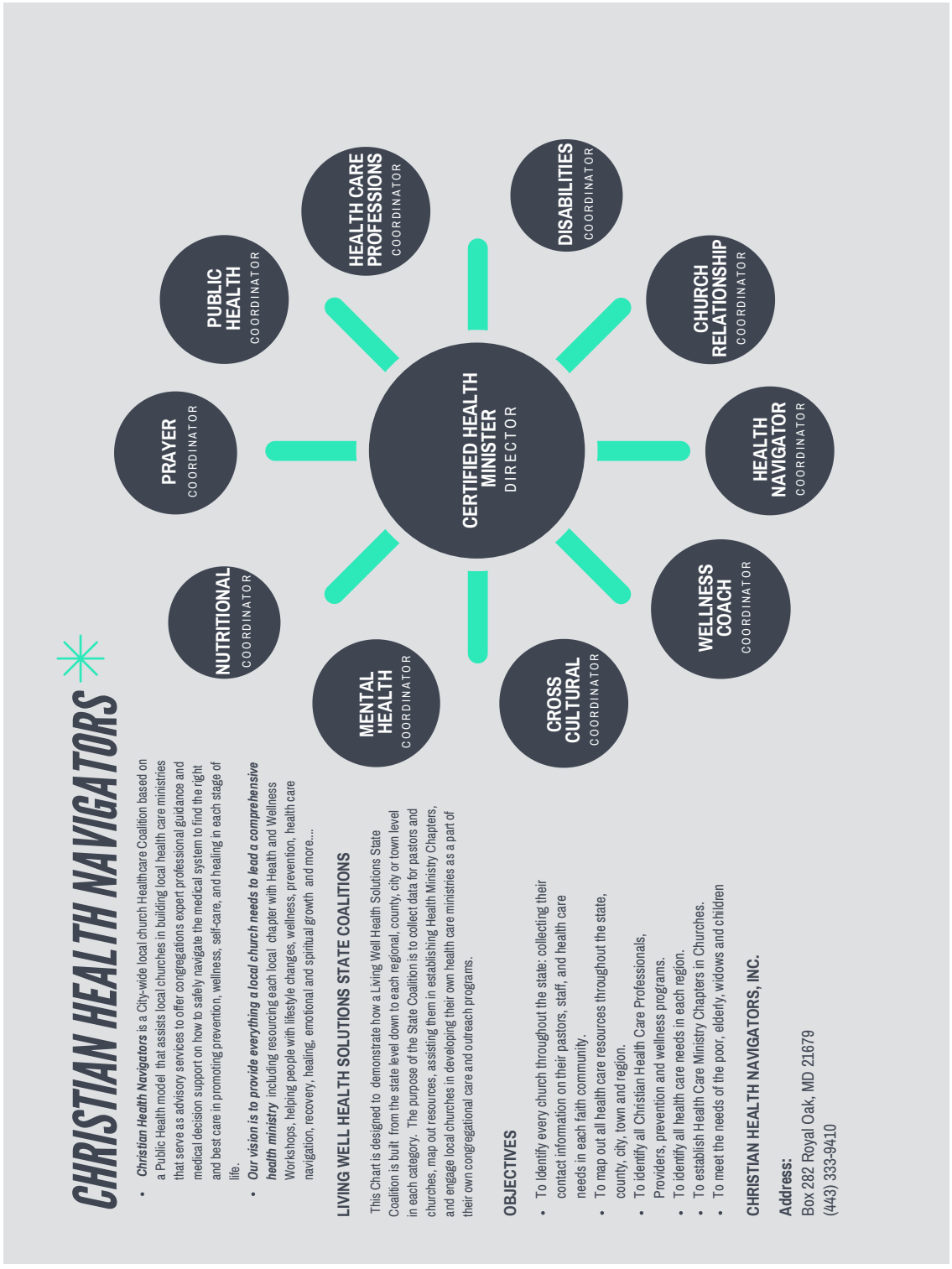
16. Final Inquiry- If you could Co-Author what your Churches role should be toward the Community in the future, What would that look like?

    _____

    _____

APPENDIX C

Christian Health Coalition and Team Model



Christian Health Navigators, Inc.

COMMUNITY CARE COALITION TEAM

www.christianhealthnavigators.org

Prayer Coordinator	Public Health Coordinator	Health Care Professions Coordinator	Disabilities Coordinator	Church Relationship Coordinator	Health Navigator Coordinator	Wellness Coach Coordinator	Cross Cultural Coordinator	Mental Health Coordinator	Nutritional Coordinator
* Identify Existing Prayer Networks * Schedule Prayer teams to pray for sick. * Set up prayer call network. * Post prayer request online. * Intercede for those in need. * Set up church prayer, anoint, and laying on of hands for healing service. * Build strategic Church prayer network and pray for ministry of healing and wellness.	* Identify health Community Sectors and Stakeholders. * Map out services and resources. * Liaison with local healthcare agencies, hospitals, clinics, recovery rehabs, in-patient facilities, & non-traditional health practitioners. * Conduct Survey throughout the public & private sectors. * Identify needs, problems, and resources. Find why here, why now.	* Identify All Christian medical doctors, nursing, psychologists, therapists, dentist, specialist Dermatologist pharmacists, & other health care practitioners. * Collect all data all available non-traditional health practitioners. * Set up Christian health care contact lists. * Identify all Christian health care insurance providers and resources. *Identify eldercare resources.	*Identify and map out all disability program and services in the community. * Identify, assess, and work with churches that have ministry for people with disabilities. *Read/review legislation and other resources to keep abreast of current issues and trends. * Develop a community needs assessment. *Identify Educational and work training programs	* Collect church data to gather information on their mission and ministry, leadership, resources and contact information. * Contact Pastors, build long-term relationship and network them with other pastors . * Map and Assess what ministries do to help in people in their communities. * Introduce pastor to what a health care ministry is and what it will do to assist them in ministry.	* Provide church members/ patients/family education and self-management support * Assist church members and christians with what resources are available for them in the community for wellness and health concerns * Provide education and assistance to find resources for treatment and options for treatment of health concerns. * Ensure pastoral care.	* Identify Existing wellness and coach networks. * Develop a wellness coaching relationship with churches assisting their congregations and wellness ministries thru the process of working towards better health by providing support, encouragement and education. * Set up consultation w/local health & wellness chapters. *Design programs	* Identify all non-english speaking faith communities * Create description of each faith community * Document each cross-cultural community history. * Assess each community health & well-needs and resources. * Identify groups with little or no access to health care. * Increase the cultural capacity of your coalition team.	* Identify and collect data on mental health providers & resources. * Create lists for psychologists & psychotherapists, marriage & family therapists, and addiction specialists, etc. * Identify all addiction recovery programs & centers. * locate services for all disability needs & resources. * Set up workshops & events	*Identify problem areas in nutrition within a community. * Develop a strategy that helps improve nutrition. * Advise people on what to eat in order to lead a healthy lifestyle or achieve a specific health-related goal. * Create a list of Registered Dietitians, food & nutrition experts and farmers. * Set up events & workshops.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, Paul. "6 Symptoms of Church Ministry Silos and Ways to Help Cure This Type of Disunity." Christianity Today, April 12, 2016. https://www.churchlawandtax.com/web/2016/april/6-symptoms-of-church-ministry-silos.html.

Alleydog. s.v. "Contextuel Intelligence." Accessed December 14, 2020. https://www.alleydog.com/glossary/definition-cit.php?term=Contextual+Intelligence.

Anderson, Javonte. "For Religious Leaders Who Serve Families Affected by Chicago's Violence, the Work Takes a Toll: 'It's A Very Lonely Place.'" *Chicago Tribune*, August 14, 2020. https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-chicago-pastors-violence-response-20200814-hgync2gjdnewdmtvvs6ypfemvq-story.html.

Anderson, Jessica. "$4.6 Million in Grant Funds Will Go to Fight Crime in Baltimore City and Baltimore County." Baltimore Sun, December 16, 2019. https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-cr-grant-money-20191216-6arlnutw4fbhjfwzzh5rem45ha-story.html.

The Association of Religion Data Archives. "US Charity Work?" https://www.thearda.com/ConQS/QS_35.asp#D97.

Astho. "Pillars of Public Health." https://www.astho.org/Public-Policy/Federal-Government-Relations/Documents/Pillars-of-Public-Health/.

Bakke, Ray. *A Theology as Big as the City.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997.

Bakke, Ray and Jon Sharpe, *Street Signs: A New Direction in Urban Ministry*. Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2006.

Baltzell, E. Digby. *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Class Authority and Leadership*. New York: Macmillan, 1982.

Bartusch, Mark W. *Understanding Dan: An Exegetical Study of a Biblical City, Tribe and Ancestor.* London: Sheffield Academic Press, Ltd., 2003.

Becker Bob, and Mary Lou Becker, "Does 'Ecclesia' Mean 'Church'? Confusion in Christendom." Bible Bonanza. Accessed June 18, 2020. http://www.biblebonanza.com/ecclesia.html.

Beekmand, John, and John Callow. *Translating the Word of God* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974.

Bender, Courtney, and Ann Taves. *What Matters? Ethnographies of Value in a Not So Secular Age.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Benner, Jeff A. "The Philosophy of the Hebrew Language." The Ancient Hebrew Research Center. Accessed October 21, 2020. https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/language/philosophy-of-the-hebrew-language.htm.

Berding, Kenneth. "How Did Early Christians Respond to Plagues? Historical Reflections as the Coronavirus Spreads." Biola University: Talbot School of Theology Faculty Blog, March 16, 2020. https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2020/how-did-early-christians-respond-to-plagues.

Berg, Timothy. "The Coming of King James and the Millenary Petition." King James Bible History, May 11, 2020. https://kjbhistory.com/the-millenary-petition-and-its-connection-to-the-hampton-court-conference/.

Berry, Michael J. *Foundation for Restoration.* Bedford, TX: Revival Press, 1988.

Bevans, Stephen. *Contextual Theology as Practical Theology*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2018.

Bielo, James S. *Words Upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study.* New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Black, Eric. "Editorial: Now's the Time to Seek the Welfare of the City." Baptist Standard, March 11, 2020. https://www.baptiststandard.com/opinion/editorials/nows-the-time-to-seek-the-welfare-of-the-city.

Blake, Ron. "The World Is My Parish or My Parish Is the World." Wesley's Horse, October 29, 2017. http://wesleyshorse.com/the-world-is-my-parish-or-my-parish-is-the-world/.

Boole, Marla. "Spiritual Mapping Introduction." Kairos Transformation Ministries. Accessed December 19, 2020. http://www.kairostransformation.org/apps/articles/web/articleid/14028/columnid/2618/default.asp.

Bradley, Michael Raymond. "The Puritans of Virginia: Their Influence on the Religious Life of the Old Dominion, 1607-1659." PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1971.

Briggs, Dean. *Ekklesia Rising: The Authority of Christ in Communities of Contending Prayer.* Kansas City, MO: Champion Press, 2014.

Brodd, Sven-Erick. "Ecclesiology." In *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions*, edited by Anne L Runehov and Lluís Oviedo Runehov. Berlin: Springer Link, 2013.

Brown, Amanda Christy, and Holly Epstein Ojalvo. “The Power of Place: Doing Ethnographic Studies of Local Sites.” *The New York Times*, April 15, 2010. https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/ the-power-of-place-doing-ethnographic-studies-of-local-sites/.

Brown, Charles. “Contextual Intelligence (CI): The Key To Successful Consulting.” Head in the Game. Accessed December 14, 2020. https://headinthegame.net/resources/library/contextual-intelligence-ci-the-key-to-successful-consulting/.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Prophetic Imagination.* Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2012.

Buckingham, Rob. “Is it Wrong for the Church to Entertain People?” Bayside Church, April 30, 2014. https://baysidechurch.com.au/blog/is-it-wrong-for-the-church-to-entertain-people/.

Burley, Mikel. “Dislocating the Eschaton? Appraising Realized Eschatology.” *Sophia* 56 (2017): 435-452. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11841-016-0534-0.

Bush, Phillip. “Advanced Care,” Heal the Sick Heal the Sick. Class Lecture, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC, February 23, 2018.

Butettner, Dan. “Covid-19: Straight Answers from Top Epidemiologist Who Predicted the Pandemic.” *Blue Zones*. https://www.bluezones.com/2020/06/covid-19-straight-answers-from-top-epidemiologist-who-predicted-the-pandemic/.

Butterfoss, Francis Dunn. *Coalitions and Partnerships in Community Health.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.

Campbell, Marci Kramish, et al. “Church-Based Health Promotion Interventions: Evidence and Lessons Learned.” *Annual Review of Public Health* 28 (2007): 213-34. https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/ 10.1146/annurev.publhealth.28.021406.144016.

Campbell, Richard D. “The Transtheoretical Method: A Theoretical Application to Homelessness.” Master’s thesis, Grand Valley State University, 2006. https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1642&context=theses.

Caudle, Tara. “The Ekklesia as an Assembly that Invokes Response.” *Liberty University Journal of Statesmanship & Public Policy* 1, no. 1 (2020).

CDC Foundation. “What Is Public Health?” CDC Foundation. Accessed December 19, 2020. https://www.cdcfoundation.org/what-public-health.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "1918 Pandemic." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed November 30, 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-pandemic-h1n1.html.

_____. "Leading Causes of Death." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed November 30, 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm.

_____. "The Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed January 1, 2021. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/publichealthissue/publichealthapproach.html.

_____. "An Introduction to Applied Epidemiology and Biostatistics." Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed October 27, 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/csels/dsepd/ss1978/lesson1/section1.html.

Chamberlain, J. Edward. *If This Is Your Land Where Is Your Story.* New York: Vintage Canada, 2010.

Chase-Ziolek, Mary. "(Re)Claiming the Church's Role in Promoting Health: A Practical Framework." *Journal of Christian Nursing* 32, no. 2 (April/June 2015): 100-7.

Chaves, Mark and William Tsitsos. "Congregations and Social Services: What They Do, How They Do It, and With Whom." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30 no. 4 (December 2001): 660-83.

Cheung, Man Chung. "The Contributions of Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar to Ecumenical Missional Ecclesiology." PhD. diss., The University of St. Michael's College, 2012.

Christianity Today. "Ulrich Zwingli." Christianity Today. Accessed September 17, 2020. https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/moversandshakers/ulrich-zwingli.html.

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. *Handbook for Community Anti-Drug Coalitions*. Alexandria, VA: National Coalition Institute, 2009.

Community Toolbox. "Chapter 27, Building Culturally Competent Organizations." Community Toolbox. Accessed December 15, 2020. https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/culturally-competent-organizations/main.

_____. "Chapter 27, Understanding Culture and Diversity in Building Communities." Community Toolbox. Accessed December 15, 2020, https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/culture-and-diversity/main.

_____. "Chapter 5, Choosing Strategies to Promote Community Health and Development." Community Toolbox. Accessed January 1, 2021,

https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/promotion-strategies/overview/main.

Council of the Churches in Germany. "Council of the Churches in Germany." 2007. https://www.oekumene-ack.de/uploads/tx_wbpublica/ACK_Broschure_english_version.pdf.

Crowe, Brandon. "Textual Criticism: What It Is and Why You Need It." Westminster Theological Seminary, February 11, 2019. https://faculty.wts.edu/posts/textual-criticism-what-it-is-and-why-you-need-it/.

Crudge, Michael R. "The Disconnected Church: A Critical Examination of the Communication of the Christian Church in New Zealand." PhD dissertation, Auckland University of Technology, 2013. https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/ 10292/5922/CrudgeM.pdf?sequence=3.

Daniell, David. *The Bible in English.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.

Dastrup, R. Adam. "Understanding Culture." Introduction to Human Geography. Accessed December 14, 2020. https://humangeography.pressbooks.com/chapter/understanding-culture.

Dean, Arthur T. *Capacity Primer: Building Membership, Structure and Leadership.* Alexandria, VA: CADCA, 2001.

_____. *Planning Primer: Developing a Theory of Change, Logic Models and Strategic and Action Plans*. Alexandria, VA: CADCA, 2006.

Dennison, Jack. *City Reaching: The Road to Community Transformation.* Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999.

Denova, Rebecca. "Jesus Christ." Ancient History Encyclopedia, January 5, 2021. https://www.ancient.eu/Jesus_Christ/.

Dourish, Paul. "Reading and Interpreting Ethnography." University of California, Irvine, October 2012. http://www.gillianhayes.com/Inf231F12/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/ethnography-ways-submit.pdf.

Drake, Michael L. *A King's Bible.* Auckland, NZ: Wycliffe Christian Schools, 2005.

Droege, Thomas A. "Congregations as Communities of Health and Healing." *Interpretation* 49, no. 2 (1995): 117.

Du Toit, Philip La G. "Reconsidering the Salvation of Israel in Luke-Acts." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (October, 2020): 1-27. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0142064X20962662?journalCode=jnta.

Edwards, Jessie K., and Justin Lessler. “What Now? Epidemiology in the Wake of a Pandemic.” *American Journal of Epidemiology* 190, no. 1 (2020): 1.

Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible VII. Grand Rapids, MI : Zondervan, 1959.

Encyclopedia Britannica. s.v. “Book of Common Prayer.” Last modified September 18, 2017. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Book-of-Common-Prayer#ref196257.

_____. s.v. “Masoretic Text.” Last updated September 20, 2013. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Masoretic-text.

Eyl, Jennifer. “Semantic Voids, New Testament Translation, and Anachronism: The Case of Paul’s Use Of Ekklesia.” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 26, no. 4 (November 2014): 315-39.

Facing History. “Separation: Synagogue and Church, Jew and Christian.” Facing History. Accessed January 17, 2021. https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/Ch.2.pdf.

Faison, Brenda. “Introduction to Faith and Health.” Heal the Sick. Class Lecture, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC, February 9, 2018.

Flavius Josephus. *Antiquities of the Jews,* edited by William Whiston. Farmingdale, NY: First Rate Publishers, 2013.

Ford, William L. *Created for Influence: Transforming Culture from Where You Are.* Minneapolis: Chosen Books, 2014.

Foster, William Landes, Peter Kim, and Barbara Christiansen. “Ten Nonprofit Funding Models.” Standard Social Innovation Review, Spring 2009. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/ten_nonprofit_funding_models.

Fournier, Denise. “Why We Should Stop Running from Pain.” Psychology Today, August 2, 2020. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mindfully-present-fully-alive/202008/why-we-should-stop-running-pain.

Fredriksen, Paula. “The Empire’s Religions.” PBS, April 1998. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/portrait/empire.html.

Frost, Michael, and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping Of Things To Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013.

Galea, Sandro. “On Religion and Public Health.” Boston Public School of Public Health, July 24, 2016. https://www.bu.edu/sph/2016/07/24/on-religion-and-public-health/.

Galvez, Cesar. “Biblical Perspectives on Health for the Contemporary World.” *International Forum* 13, no. 1 (April 2010): 20-29.

Gibbs, Eddie. Foreword to Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Gills Exposition of the Bible. "Luke 17:14." Bible Study Tools. Accessed December 20, 2020. https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/luke-17-14.html.

Godfrey, Neil. "Messiahs and Eschatology in Second Temple Judaism." Vridar, December 4, 2018. https://vridar.org/2018/12/04/messiahs-and-eschatology-in-second-temple-judaism.

Goodman, Michael. "Systems Thinking: What, Why, When, Where, and How?" The Systems Thinker. Accessed October 15, 2020. https://thesystemsthinker.com/systems-thinking-what-why-when-where-and-how.

Gordon, Wayne, and John M. Perkins. *Making Neighborhoods Whole: A Handbook for Christian Community Development.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013.

Goudie, Chuck, Barb Markoff, Christine Tressel, Ross Weidner, and Jonathan Fagg. "Chicago Murders Up in 2020, Outpacing National Increase: FBI Data." Eyewitness News, September 17, 2020. https://abc7chicago.com/chicago-murders-2020-crime-fbi/6431761/.

Grace and Peace. "M15 Resurrection Stories." Grace and Peace. Accessed December 18, 2020. https://www.graceandpeacemagazine.org/m15-resurrection-stories?id=37.

Grant, Laymen. Interview by author, Wilmington, DE, January 5, 2019.

Greenway, Roger S., ed. *Discipling the City: Theological Reflections on Urban Mission.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979.

Hailes, Sam. "The Passion Translation: Dr. Brian Simmons Responds to His Critics." Premier Christianity, May 2018. https://www.premierchristianity.com/Past-Issues/2018/May-2018/The-Passion-translation-Dr-Brian-Simmons-responds-to-his-critics.

Hamel, Steven C. *Semiotics: Theory and Applications.* New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2011.

Hamma, Robert M. *Landscapes of the Soul: A Spirituality of Place.* Notre Dame, IN: Ava Maria Press, Inc., 1998.

Hammersley, Martyn, and Paul Atkinson. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1993. http://phg.sage.pub.com/cgi/content/refs/24/4/550.

Harvest Rock Church. "Official Statement Regarding the Lawsuit Against Gov. Newsom." Harvest Rock Church. Accessed December 4, 2020.

https://harvestrock.church/official-statement-regarding-the-lawsuit-against-gov-newsom.

Havenman-Nies, A., S.C. Jansen, J.A.M van Oers, and P. van t'Veer. "Epidemiology in Public Health Practice." *American Journal Of Epidemiology* 174, no. 7 (October 2011): 871-72.

Heltzel, Peter G. "Faith-rooted Organizing Brings People Together To Create Change." Faith and Leadership, July 14, 2015. https://faithandleadership.com/peter-g-heltzel-faith-rooted-organizing-brings-people-together-create-change.

Heneghan, Carl, and Tom Jefferson. "COVID-19 Deaths Compared to the Swine Flu." Centre for Evidence Based Medicine, April 9, 2020. https://www.cebm.net/covid-19/covid-19-deaths-compared-with-swine-flu.

Herbert, Steve. "For Ethnography." *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 4 (December 2000): 550–68. https://doi.org/10.1191/030913200100189102.

_____. "Seeking the Welfare of the City." Heritage, May 1, 2012. https://www.heritage.org/marriage-and-family/commentary/seeking-the-welfare-the-city.

Hill, Charles L., ed. *The Loci Communes of Philipp Melanchthon.* Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1944.

Hill, Tim. "Sermon: Beyond the Mist." Lecture at Global Prayer Alliance Gathering, Griffin, GA, November 7, 2018. http://www.gnni.org/2018-venues.html.

Hillman, Os. "Reclaiming the Seven Mountains of Culture, Part 1." Eternal Leadership, November 5, 2018. https://eternalleadership.com/244-2.

Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006.

History of Switzerland. "Swiss Reformation." History of Switzerland. Accessed September 17, 2020. http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/reformation-switzerland-calvin.html.

History.com. "Pandemics that Changed History." History.com, last updated December 21, 2020. https://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/pandemics-timeline.

HIV.gov. "Fast Facts." HIV.gov. Accessed December 30, 2020. https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/data-and-trends/statistics.

Holmes, Michael W. "What Are English Translations of the Bible Based On?" The Society of Biblical Literature. Accessed January 3, 2021. http://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/bible-basics/what-are-english-translations-of-the-bible-based-on.

Idler, Ellen. *Religion as a Social Determinant of Public Health.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Inge, John. *A Christian Theology of Place: Explorations In Pastoral Practice And Empirical Theology.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2003.

Insight of the King. "Ulrich Zwingli: The 1531 Zurich Bible." Insight of the King. Accessed September 16, 2020. https://www.insightoftheking.com/ulrich-zwingli-and-the-1531-zurich-bible.html.

Jackson, Wayne. "Were the King James Version Translators Biased Toward the 'Faith-Only' Doctrine?" Christian Courier. Accessed January 3, 2021. https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/257-were-the-king-james-version-translators-biased-toward-the-faith-only-doctrine.

Jenkins, Daniel T. "Congregationalism: Protestant Movement. Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified March 26, 2019. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Congregationalism.

Johnson, Christopher, Pamela E. Klassen, and Winnifred Fallers Sullivan. *Ekklesia: Three Inquiries in Church and State.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Johnson, Leonard H. *No Place Like Home: A Christian Theology of Place.* Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishing, 2014.

Jones, Abigail. "Murder Town USA (aka Wilmington, Delaware)." *Newsweek,* December 19, 2014. https://www.newsweek.com/2014/12/19/wilmington-delaware-murder-crime-290232.html.

K., David. "Bibles of the Reformation." Presbyterian Historical Society, October 6, 2016. https://www.history.pcusa.org/blog/2016/10/bibles-reformation.

Kegler, Michelle C., Sarah M. Hall, and Mimi Kiser. "Facilitators, Challenges, and Collaborative Activities in Faith and Health Partnerships to Address Health Disparities." *Health Education & Behavior* 37, no. 5 (October 2010): 665.

Kerény, Karl. *Gods of the Greeks.* Auckland, NZ: Pickles Partners Publishing, 2016.

Kimball, Dan. *They Like Jesus But Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.

Klausner, J. *Messianic Idea in Israel: From its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah.* New York: Macmillan, 1955.

Kohlenberger III, John R. "Presumption and Bias in Bible Translation." CBE International, August 27, 2014. https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/article/mutuality-blog-magazine/presumption-and-bias-bible-Translation.

Koplitz, Michael H. *What Rock Did Yeshua Build the Church Upon?: An Examination of Matthew 16:13-20 Using Ancient Bible Study Methods.* York, PA: Self-published, 2019.

Kurtz, Tim. *Leaving Church Becoming Ekklesia: Because Jesus Never Said He Would Build A Church Kingdom.* Albion, MI: Word Publications, 2017.

Kurz, Emily. "Why Is Historical Context Important When Studying God's Word?" Ethnos 360 Bible Institute, October 10, 2017. https://e360bible.org/blog/historical-context-important-studying-gods-word.

LaFlora, Stephanie Imani. "Decoding Hip-Hop's Controversial Lyrics." Urban Faith, November 2011. https://urbanfaith.com/2011/11/decode-the-lyrics-to-jay-z-and-kanye-wests-no-church-in-the-wild.html/.

Last, JM, ed. *Dictionary of Epidemiology.* 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Last, Richard. "Ekklesia Outside the Septuagint and the Demos: The Title of Greco-Roman Associations and Christ Followers' Groups." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 4 (2018): 959-80.

Lausanne Movement. "Towards the Transformation of Our Cities/Regions (LOP 37)." Occasional Paper No. 37, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2004. https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/towards-transformation-citiesregions-lop-37.

Lawrence, Louise Joy. *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew: A Critical Assessment of the Use of the Honour and Shame Model in the New Testament.* Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003.

Leach, Neil, ed. *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory.* New York: Routledge, 1999.

LeadNYC. "10 ZIP Codes Project." Lead.NYC. Accessed December 19, 2020. https://lead.nyc/10-zip-codes-project.

Lechissa, Mesherem. "Major Types of Qualitative Research Methodologies." Bahir Dar University, June 2017. https://bdu.edu.et/capacity/sites/bdu.edu.et.capacity/files/Attachement/Approaches%20of%20Qualitative%20Research_0.pdf.

Leong, David P. *Race & Place: How Urban Geography Shapes the Journey to Reconciliation.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007.

_____. *Street Signs Toward A Missional Theology of Urban Cultural Engagement.* Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012.

Levin, Jeff. "Engaging the Faith Community for Public Health Advocacy: An Agenda for the Surgeon General." *Journal of Religion and Health* 52 (2013):368-85. https://www.baylorisr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2013-JRH-Engaging-the-Faith-Community1.pdf

Lewis, Robert. *The Church of Irresistible Influence.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

Livermore, David A. *Cultural Intelligence: Improving Your CQ to Engage Our Multicultural World.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009.

Long, Phillip J. "The Context of Psalm of Solomon 17." Reading Acts, August 6, 2018. https://readingacts.com/2018/08/06/the-context-of-psalm-of-solomon-17.

Lynch, Eleanor W., and Marci J Hanson. *Developing Cross-cultural Competence: A Guide for Working with Children and Their Families.* 3rd Edition. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, 2004.

Madhav, Nita, et al. "Pandemics: Risks, Impacts, and Mitigation." In *Disease Control Priorities: Improving Health and Reducing Poverty*. 3rd ed., edited by DT Jameson et al. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525302/.

Madison, D. Soyini. *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance.* London: Sage Publications, 2005.

Make It Our Business. "What Does It Mean to be Culturally Competent?" Make It Our Business, June 22, 2017. http://makeitourbusiness.ca/blog/what-does-it-mean-be-culturally-competent.

Malgesini, Frank. "An Ethnographic Approach to Literature: Reading Wildfell Hall in the L1 and L2 Classroom." PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2010. https://repository.arizona.edu/bitstream/handle/10150/193935/azu_etd_11021_sip1_m.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Marquette University. "Biblical Studies: Conducting Exegesis." Marquette University, last updated January 6, 2021. https://libguides.marquette.edu/c.php?g=36796&p=2974240.

McGinnis, J.M., and W.H. Foege, "Actual Causes of Death in the United States." *JAMA* 270 no. 18 (1993): 2207-12. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8411605.

McKnight, Scot. "The Politics of Bible Translations," Patheos, October 1, 2014. https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2014/10/01/the-politics-of-bible-translations.

Merritt, Jonathan. "America's Epidemic of Empty Churches." *The Atlantic,* November 25, 2018. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/what-should-america-do-its-empty-church-buildings/576592/.

Metzger, Bruce M. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament.* New York: American Bible Society, 1971.

Meyers, Eleanor Scott, ed. *Envisioning the New City: A Reader on Urban Ministry.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992.

Michigan Health Improvement Alliance. https://mihia.org.

Miller, Monica R. "'No Church in the Wild': The Youth's Unrecognized Spirituality Between Beats and Rhymes." HuffPost, December 6, 2017. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/no-church-in-the-Wild-spirituality -between-beats-and-rhymes_b_1756187.

Minnesota Department of Health. "Engaging Faith Based Communities in the Opioid Epidemic." Minnesota Department of Health. Accessed December 7, 2020. https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/opioids/communities/faithcommunities.html.

Morrison, Patt. "The U.S. Medical System Is Broken. We Should Be Listening to Doctors About How to Fix It." *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 2017. https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-ol-patt-morrison-robert-pearl-healthcare-20170705-htmlstory.html.

Moschella, Mary Clark. *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction.* Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008.

Movement Day. "Our Vision." Movement Day. Accessed December 30, 2020. https://www.movementday.com/our-vision.

MPH Online. "Outbreak: 10 of the Worst Pandemics in History." MPH Online. Accessed December 22, 2020. https://www.mphonline.org/worst-pandemics-in-history.

National Academies. *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures*. Washington, DC National Academies Press, 2018. https://www.nap.edu/read/24783/chapter/4.

National Center for Cultural Competence. "Definitions of Cultural Competence." National Center for Cultural Competence. Accessed December 14, 2020. https://nccc.georgetown.edu/curricula/culturalcompetence.html.

Neighborhood Scout. "Baltimore, MD Crime Rates." Neighborhood Scout. Accessed December 21, 2020. https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/md/baltimore/crime.

Newgrass, Edgar. *An Outline of Anglo-American Bible History.* London: B.T Batsford, 1958.

Nichols, Bruce J. *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1979.

Nicoll, Regis. “The Consumer Driven Church.” Crisis Magazine, October 26, 2016. https://www.crisismagazine.com/2016/consumer-driven-church.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture.* New York: Harper and Row, 1951.

NPR. “‘A Loss to the Whole Society’: U.S. COVID-19 Death Toll Reaches 500,000.” *NPR*, February 22, 2021. https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/02/22/969494791/a-loss-to-the-whole-society-u-s-covid-19-death-toll-reaches-500-000.

Nuñez, Angel. Interview by author, Gainesville, GA, March 19, 2017.

Online Library of Liberty. “Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation.” Online Library of Liberty. Accessed September 17, 2020. https://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/zwingli-and-the-swiss-reformation.

Opitz, Peter. “The Authority of Scripture in the Early Zurich Reformation (1522-1540).” Zurich Open Repository and Archive, 2011. https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/65837/7/ZORA65837akz.pdf.

Ormerod, Neil. *Re-visioning The Church: An Experiment in Systematic Historical Ecclesiology.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014.

Osborne, Kenan. *A Theology of the Church for the Third Millennium: A Franciscan Approach.* Leiden, NL: Brill, 2009.

Otaigbe, Osoba O. *Building Cultural Intelligence in Church and Ministry: 10 Ways to Assess and Improve Your Cross-Cultural Competence in Church, Ministry and the Workplace.* Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2016.

Otis, George. *Informed Intercession: Transforming Your Community Through Spiritual Mapping and Strategic Prayer.* Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publications, 1999.

Overton, Larry G. “The Origin of the Word ‘Church’ (Part I).” Larry Overton. Last updated 2015. http://larryoverton.com /my-faith/articles/the-origin-of-the-word-church-part-1.

Paggla, Camille. “Religion and the Arts in America.” *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 15, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2007). http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/library/item/11617.

Park, Young-Ho. *Paul’s Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly: Understanding the People of God in Their Political-Social World.* Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2015.

Perkins, John M., ed. *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing It Together and Doing It Right.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995.

Perry, Dwight, ed. *Building Unity in the Church of the New Millennium*. Chicago: Moody, 2002.

Peterson, Eugene. *The Pastor: A Memoir.* New York: HarperCollins, 2011.

Petrie, Alistair. *Prophetic Ditch Digging: Preparing for Breakthrough.* Brisbane, AU: CHI Books, 2018.

_____. *God's View of a City.* Annapolis, MD: C3 Publications, 2003.

Pew Forum. "In Western European Countries With Church Taxes, Support for the Tradition Remains Strong." Pew Forum, April 30, 2019. https://www.pewforum.org/2019/04/30/in-western-european-countries-with-church-taxes-support-For-the-tradition-remains-strong.

Pfoh, Emanuel. "Notes on Ethnographic Method and Biblical Interpretation." *Biblische Notizen* 172 (2017): 43-52. https://www.academia.edu/23493582/_Notes_on_Ethnographic_Method_and_Biblical_Interpretation_Biblische_Notizen_172_2017_43_52.

Plantinga, Cornelius *Not The Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996.

Pope, Charles. "What Is Ecclesiology and Why Is It So Important Today?" Community in Mission, September 7, 2014. http://blog.adw.org/2014/09/wrong-church-wrong-pew/.

Pope, Kyle. "The Use of the Word Ekklesia in the Old Testament." Olsen Park Church of Christ. Accessed September 24, 2020. http://olsenpark.com/Sermons07/CongregationOfTheLord.html.

Powell, Mark Allan. *What Do They Hear? Bridging the Gap Between Pulpit and Pew.* Nashville: Abingdon, 2007.

Preato, Dennis J. "Junia, A Female Apostle: An Examination of the Historical Record." CBE International, April 25, 2019. https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/article/priscilla-papers-academic-journal/junia-female-Apostle-examination-historical.

Rah, Soong-Chan. *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence*. Chicago: Moody, 2010.

Reeves, Leonard. "Our Health Care System Is Sick." The American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation, January 28, 2019. https://www.aafp.org/news/blogs/leadervoices/entry/20190128lv-sickcare.html.

Rich in Faith. Season 1, episode 4. "Baby It's Cold Outside." Produced by Evan Sweldelson. Aired December 24, 2015, on Oxygen Channel Network.

Rosario, Jeffrey. "Staying Home From Church to Protect Public Health is a Christian Tradition: Evangelicals Arguing for In-Person Services Amid Pandemic are Misunderstanding Christianity." *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/04/12/staying-home-church-protect-public-health-is-christian-tradition/.

Roxburgh, Alan, and Fred Romanuk. *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach the World.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Roxburgh, Alan. *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time.* New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2015.

_____. *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011.

_____. *Missional Map-making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.

Rozier, Michael. "A Catholic Contribution to Global Public Health," Annals of Global Health 86, no. 1 (2020). https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7059419/.

Runehov, Anne L., and Lluís Oviedo Runehov, eds. *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions.* Berlin, Germany: Springer Link, 2013.

Rushdoony, Rousas John. *Salvation and Godly Rule.* Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1983.

Schmidt, Alvin J. *How Christianity Changed The World* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

Schreiter, Robert J. *Constructing Local Theologies*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985.

Schultz, Howard. *Pour Your Heart into It: How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time.* New York: Hachette, 1997.

Seaman, Shaun. "The New Parish Part 2 (Sermon)." Trinity Presbyterian Church, Carp, Ontario, Canada, September 2014. https://trinitykanata.ca/whats-happening/archived-sermons/.

Sheerin, Mark. "Why I Left World Vision for Finance." Christianity Today, February 22, 2013. https://www.christianitytoday.com/thisisourcity/7thcity/why-i-left-world-vision-for-finance.html.

Sider, Ron, Philip N. Olson, and Heidi Rolland Unruh. *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works.* Ada, MI: Baker, 2002.

Silva, Moises, ed. "*Ἐκκλησία* G1711 (ekklesia)." In *The New Testament International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis.* Nashville: Zondervan, 2014.

_____. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.

Silvoso, Ed. *Ekklesia: Rediscovering God's Instrument for Global Transformation*. Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2017.

Smith, Glenn. "Exegete Your Community to Inform Transformational Strategies." Send Institute, April 24, 2018. https://www.sendinstitute.org/exegete-community.

_____. "Reading Your Community: Toward an Authentic Encounter with the City." *Church for Vancouver.* Accessed October 24, 2020. https://www.academia.edu/10289993/Reading_your_Community_Towards_an_authentic_Encounter_with_the_city.

Smith, Samuel. "Church Leaders Unite to Heal Nation's Racial Divide." Christian Post, October 29, 2015. https://www.christianpost.com/news/ronnie-floyd-southern-baptists-racial-reconciliation-church.html.

Smith, Tiffany Watt. "Not Just a German Word: A Brief History of Schadenfreude." LitHub, November 21, 2018. https://lithub.com/not-just-a-german-word-a-brief-history-of-schadenfreude/.

Sotelo, Nicole. "Jesus' Health Care Plan." National Catholic Reporter, October 1, 2009. https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/jesus-health-care-plan.

Sparks, Paul, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen. *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Church Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship, And Community.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014.

Stackhouse, John G. Jr., ed. *What Does It Mean to be Saved? Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002.

Stark, Rodney. *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome.* San Francisco: Harper, 2006.

Stetzer, Ed. "Evangelicals, Culture, and Post Christian America." *Christianity Today*, May 20, 2015.

Stetzer, Ed, and David Pullman. *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community.* Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000.

Stevenson, Natalie Wigg. "From Proclamation To Conversation: Ethnographic Disruptions To Theological Normative." *Palgrave Communications* 1 (2015): 15024-33.

Stewart, Don. "How Should a Person Choose a Bible Translation? Which Bible Translation Is the Best?" Blue Letter Bible, last modified July 18, 2018. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/stewart_don/faq/bible-translations/question8-how-should-a-person-choose-bible-translation.cfm.

Stolberg, Sheryl Gay, and Stephen Babcock. "Scenes of Chaos in Baltimore as Thousands Protest Freddie Gray's Death." *The New York Times*, April 25, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/26/us/baltimore-crowd-swells-in-protest-of-freddie-grays-death.html.

Strang, Victoria. "A Healing Ministry for Modern Times: Christ, Organizing & Public Health." Theology and Culture, May 2, 2017. https://dailytheology.org/2017/05/02/jesus-was-a-community-organizer-who-healed-a-public-health-ministry-for-modern-times/.

Stroh, David Peter. *Systems Thinking for Social Change: A Practical Guide to Solving Complex Problems, Avoiding Unintended Consequences, and Achieving Lasting Results.* White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015.

Stone, Lyman. "Christianity Has Been Handling Epidemics for 2000 Years." *Foreign Policy*, March 13, 2020. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/13/christianity-epidemics-2000-years-should-i-still-go-to-church-coronavirus/.

Study.com. "Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin: History, Importance & Impact." Study.com, video lesson, 7:33. Accessed September 17, 2020. https://study.com/academy/lesson/ulrich-zwingli-and-john-calvinl-history-and-philosophy.html.

Sutton, Roger. *A Gathering Momentum: Stories of Christian Unity Transforming Our Towns and Cities.* Hertz, UK: Instant Apostle Watford, 2017.

_____. Interview with author via Skype, Manchester, UK, March 2018.

Swanson, Eric, and Sam Williams. *To Transform a City: Whole Church, Whole Gospel, Whole City.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.

Sweeney, Jon M. "Leonard Sweet On Signs, Signals, Churches, and the Current State of Starbucks." Explore Faith. Accessed October 13, 2020. http://www.explorefaith.org/faces/my_faith/leonard_sweet.php.

Sweet, Leonard. *Ring of Fire: Walking in Faith Through a Volcanic Fire.* Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2019.

_____. *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church.* Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009.

Tanner, Kathryn, ed. *Spirit in the Cities: Searching for Soul in the Urban Landscape.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.

That the World May Know. “City of Pagans.” That the World May Know. Accessed December 10, 2020. https://www.thattheworldmayknow.com/gates-of-hell-article.

The King James Bible. “Instructions to Translators.” The King James Bible. Accessed September 14, 2020. http://thekingsbible.com/Library/InstructionsToTranslators.

The Reconciled Church. “The Reconciled Church March 2017 Panel Discussion.” The Reconciled Church, July 24, 2017, video, 1:04:26. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o80onGODmgQ.

Trueman, Michael. “When Parishes Merge or Close.” Catholic Answers, July 1, 2007. https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/when-parishes-merge-or-close.

Ulmer, Jeffrey T., and Casey T. Harris. “Race and the Religious Contexts of Violence: Linking Religion and White, Black, and Latino Violent Crime.” *The Sociological Quarterly* 4 (Fall 2013): 610-46.

University of Texas. “We All Live Here.” University of Texas. Accessed November 3, 2020. https://bridgingbarriers.utexas.edu/whole-communities-whole-health/.

VanderKam, James C. *An Introduction to Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.

Verblovsky, R.J. Zvi. “Messiah and Messianic Movements.” *The New Encyclopedia Britannica.* Chicago, 1976.

Viola, Frank. “The Backstory Behind *Reimagining Church*.” Frank Viola, September 3, 2008. https://frankviola.org/2008/09/03/the-back-story-behind-reimagining-church.

_____. *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity.* Colorado, Springs: David C. Cook, 2008.

Vogelbusch, Rev. Johannes. Interview with author via WhatsApp, December 21, 2020.

Wallace, Robert B., ed. *Maxcy-Rosenau-Last Public Health and Preventive Medicine*, 15th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2008.

Walls, Andrew F., and Mark R. Gornik. *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017.

Walls, J.L., ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Wang, Hansi Lo. “‘It’s All About Church Closings’: Catholic Parishes Shrink in Northeast, Midwest.” NPR, September 14, 2015. https://www.npr.org/2015/09/14/436938871/-it-s-all-about-church-closings-catholic-parishes-shrink-in-northeast.

Waning, Brenda, and Michael Montagne. *Pharmacoepidemiology: Principles and Practice.* New York: McGraw-Hill Education, LLC, 2001.

Ward, Peter, ed. *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012.

Washburn, Donna, Heather Kelly, Christine Arnzen, and Emma Hale. "Adult and Teen Challenge Outcome Study Report." ATC published Report, 2019. https://teenchallengeusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Adult-and-Teen-Challenge-Outcome-Study-Report-Final-REV-101519.pdf.

Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Post-Modern World.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.

Webster, John. *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II.* London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016.

Welton, Jonathan. "Jonathan Welton Interview with Brian Simmons." Reading the Passion Bible, July 22, 2017. http://readingthepassionbible.com/jonathan-welton-interview/.

West, Kanye. "No Church in the Wild." May 29, 2012. 5:03. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJt7gNi3Nr4.

White, James R. *What Every Christian Needs to Know About The Qur'an.* Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 2013.

White, Sarah K. "What Is Transformational Leadership? A Model for Motivating Innovation." CIO, February 21, 2018. https://www.cio.com/article/3257184/what-is-transformational-leadership-a-model-for-motivating-innovation.html.

Whiting, Michael. "Pandemics and the Church: What Does History Teach Us?" Dallas Baptist University, March 30, 2020. https://www.dbu.edu/news/2020/03/pandemics-and-the-church-What-does-history-teach-us.html.

Wikipedia. "Theory of Change." Wikipedia, last modified December 17, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_change.

Williams, Paul R. *When All Plans Fail: Be Ready for Disaster.* Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2015.

Wilson, Andrew. "The Passion 'Translation' Debate: Brian Simmons Responds." Think Theology, April 8, 2016 https://thinktheology.co.uk/blog/article/the_passion_translation_debate_brian_simmons_responds.

Wilson, John Francis. *Caesarea Philippi: Banias, The Lost City of Pan.* New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, Ltd., 2004.

Wingfield, Mark. "LA County Pursues Contempt of Court Case Against MacArthur." Baptist News, August 20, 2020. https://baptistnews.com/article/la-county-pursues-contempt-of-court-case-against-macarthur/#.X84VAy1h1QY.

_____., "Your Friendly Neighbor Epidemiologist Has an Important Message for You." Baptist News, August 25, 2020. https://baptistnews.com/article/your-friendly-neighbor-epidemiologist-has-an-important-message-for-you/#.YFTQeC1h1QZ.

Wise, David. "The First Book Of Public Hygiene." *Answers In Genesis Creation* 26, no. 1 (December 2003): 52-55. https://answersingenesis.org/biology/disease/the-first-book-of-public-hygiene/

Wojcik, Daniel. *The End of the World as We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America*. New York: New York University Press, 1997.

Woolf, S.H., and L. Aron, eds. *U.S. Health in International Perspective: Shorter Lives, Poorer Health*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2013. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK154484/.

World Council Of Churches. "Preparatory Paper N° 11: The Healing Mission of the Church." https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/preparatory-paper-ndeg-11-the-healing-mission-of-the-church.

World Health Organization. "Leprosy." World Health Organization, September 10, 2019. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/leprosy.

_____. "Tuberculosis." World Health Organization, October 14, 2020. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/tuberculosis.